

The Cenacle



Number 67 ♦ December 2008



*The vision that you glorify in your mind,
the Ideal that you enthrone in your heart —
this you will build your life by, this you will become.*

James Allen, *As A Man Thinketh*, 1902.

Photograph by Victor Vanek

From Soulard's Notebooks

Letter to President-elect Barack Obama

December 13, 2008
3:46 p.m.
CoffeeTime Coffeehouse
Portland, Oregon

Dear President-elect Obama,

I am writing to congratulate you on being elected President of the United States. It was thrilling to be part of your campaign, to witness the hopes your campaign raised translated into a thorough victory on November 4, a clearly enunciated statement by millions repudiating the policies & attitudes ruling the world this past 8 years. George W. Bush's time is over. He will leave office this coming January a disgraced, humiliated man. A spectacular failure. A would-be King now shown a humbled fool. Between the hopes your campaign spoke toward again & again, & the deep, abiding loathing for Bush, your victory became more & more likely, & then happened.

Wow. It *really* happened. Since then you have been readying to take office, selecting your Cabinet & others who will join you in Washington, D.C. I was particularly pleased by your choice of Hillary Clinton for Secretary of State. I think she will be terrific in the role of mending international relations, repairing the tattered American image. She is a brilliant woman & I'm sure will work tirelessly for peace & reconciliation. I also admire your commitment to a bi-partisan Cabinet. Some, frankly, do not. Many are progressives, & already halfway off your bandwagon. Don't want to believe you will keep promises, don't want to get fooled again. Some talk as though you're already in office, breaking promises left & right.

Sir, I don't bear such doubts. I am certain you are intending to keep promises & do good by all. I believe in your intelligence, your heart, & most of all, your empathy toward others. I believe you when you say you wish to be the leader of one nation & will work with any who will work with you, & will listen to all who speak.

I believe there will be both victories & defeats, better & worse days. Bush is soon gone, but his kind—the iniquitous of this world who feed on the suffering of others, their vulnerabilities, sometimes their ignorance—goes on & on. The human soul may pitch toward stars, open-handed to every living being, a mortal thing ringed with countless coronas of musics, even as it may also ignore all sufferings or sensations not its own, take from others while wearing a bland, righteous mask, judge a skin color or a genital kind or a language or a philosophical or a political opinion enough to damn another, burn down his house, annihilate his loved ones, leave him gutted & dying on an empty street.

Thus it can be reasonably said that you continue along others' steps as much as you begin anew. There will be doubters & those who resist your ideas about one American family, much less one human family or one planetary family. People often will fall back on two questions: what's in it for me & mine? What do I have to give up for others, & why? Each of us, to some reasonable or unreasonable degree, will be watching how you govern from this perspective. As hard as getting elected was, & as improbable as that victory, what's to come will utterly overshadow it.

The American economy, & by extension the global economy, has been reduced to a shambles. Two unfinished wars continue in Iraq & Afghanistan. Regional wars threaten in half a dozen parts of the world. The environment's condition is deteriorating even as powerful interests will try to continue American addiction to foreign oil—not to mention its lack of affordable healthcare for millions.

The litany of woes goes on & on. There is always, frankly, a litany of woes. Mortal things suffer. We love & break up, we are lonely, we are sick, we die. Most of us labor all our lives just to survive, to retire for a few elderly years of sitting in the sunshine, feeling worn out & useless. The elite among us, not among the millions of wage slaves, fare better along the way, but still end up in a box or an urn. Just a prettier one.

What I come back to, what I find the moveable space in all this, what I call the imaginal space of possibilities, is what resides, figuratively at last, in the human heart. What got you elected was not policy so much as a persistent tapping at these secret, precious, vulnerable places. A dark-skinned man has never led this race-wounded nation. A still-young man who grew up poor, fatherless, lived some years overseas, worked very hard & gained his entrance into the finest universities in the land. Well-spoken does not describe your speeches. They cry, they ring, they summon, they urge to heal, to unite. After a dark, bloody, shameful decade, infested with lies, with brutality, with ever-increasing disappointments & diminishing prospects, you stood up & said, "Yes, We Can." You talked, in words both plain & golden, of hope, of change. You shifted the cultural dialogue from tomorrow's next calamity to tomorrow's new possibility. Your opponents mocked you & called your words pretty, empty, delusional. Each one mis-read what people wanted. Each promised to be a knight against encroaching darkness, a parent checking under the bed & in the closets for monsters. You didn't. You simply said, "Get up, check the closets with me, now under the bed. The worst monsters live in your hearts. Now you remember. Now you know."

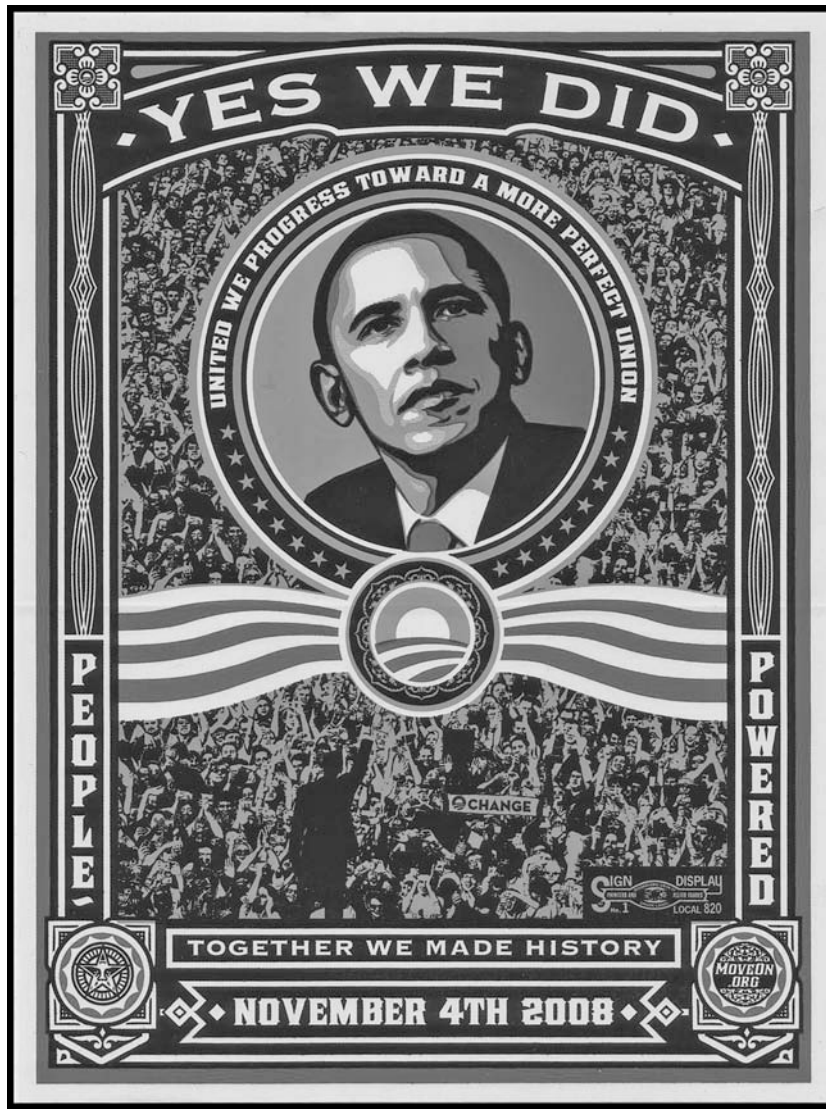
I believe, Mister President-elect, Barack, that you will do well, that you are suited for this great, hard task. You will push this nation & the world as a whole toward smarter, kinder, & eventually more prosperous days. You will lead & inspire. Others will listen, will find a model to emulate in one way or many. As always, what good that happens will not annihilate suffering or selfishness or plain stupidity. Neither fullest moon's beauty nor bloodthirstiest war lasts perpetually. Or perhaps, more accurately, life shifts between them, strangely allows & accommodates both. There will always be beauty. There will always be war.

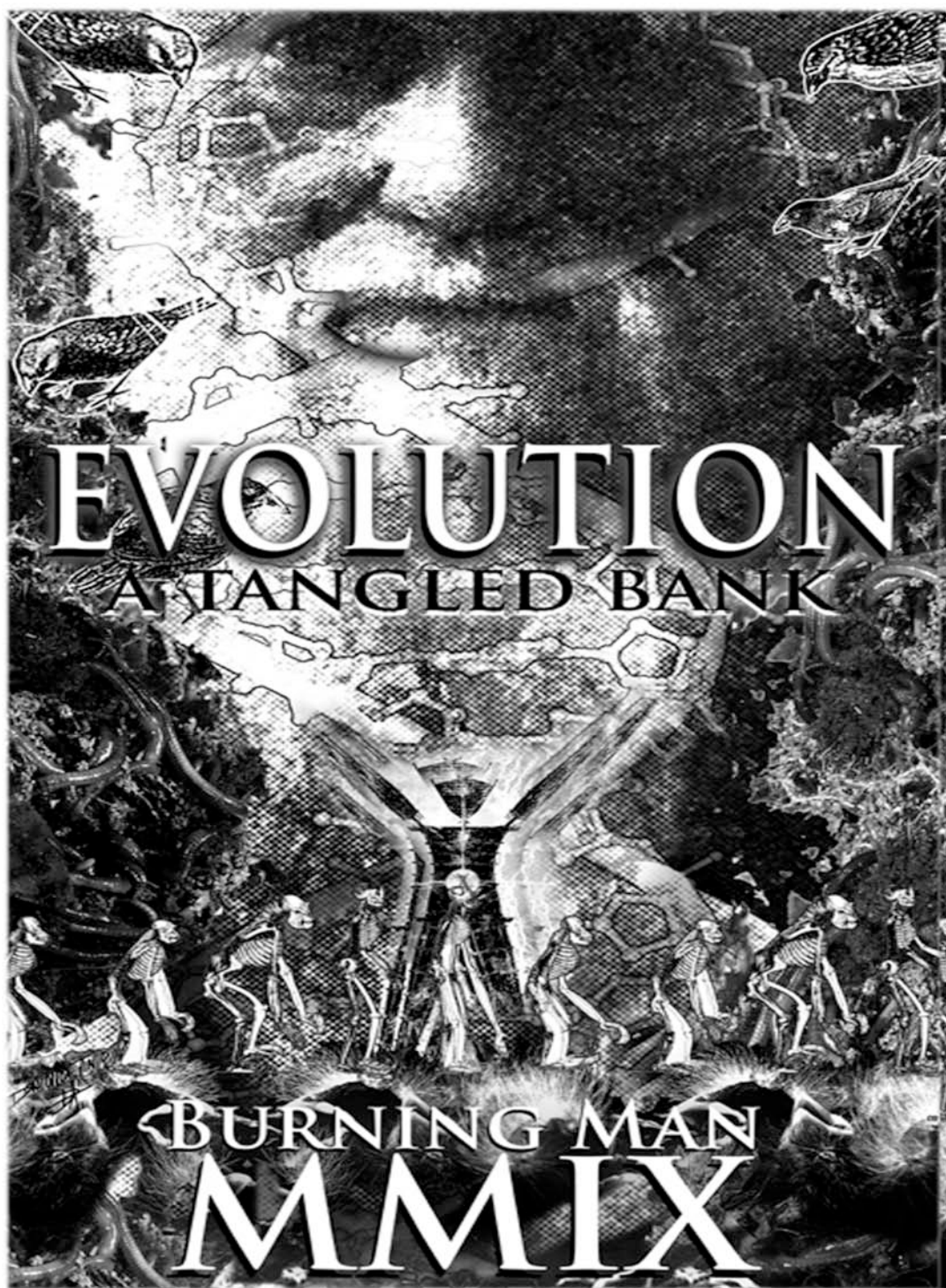
You know what you have to do, your many tasks, the many expectations, countless possibilities & pitfalls. Mysteries beyond view, unknowable turns of fortune. Tonight, some seven weeks from when you take your oath of office, I am thinking of you with love, with

respect, with a deep sense of fraternity with you, & with every possible good wish that you will succeed more often than fail, move the world into clearer air, deeper awareness of our better impulses & of each other. Tonight, I am with you in heart & spirit, I am hopeful, nothing is impossible. We *can* do this. *Yes, we can.*

Peace & love,

Raymond Lonard, Jr.
December 13, 2008
Portland, Oregon





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The Cenacle

Number 67 ♦ December 2008

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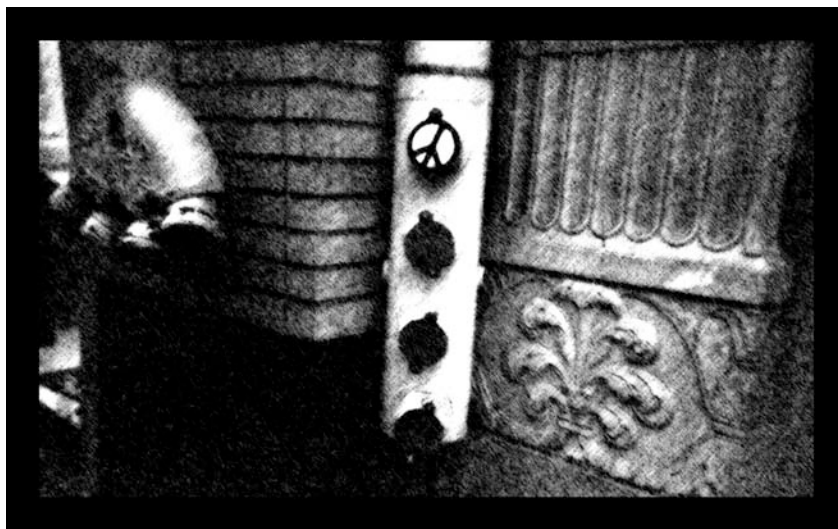
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Thanks to I.C. for somehow scooping me from cyberspace & offering me work in this destitute time for so many...I will preach the hope your confidence in me & my confidence in President-elect Obama make me feel...thanks to the friends who kept me going, including some I only know professionally, but love a little nonetheless...and to beloved Cassandra for whom I arrive, finally, at silence in my attempt to express my love for you...I’ll keep singing anyway...a last note, that *Notes from the Northwest* & *History of Scriptor Press* are missing from this issue, an absence resulting from the time constraints of job-hunting and a few too many projects going at once...I vow in 2009 to modulate my time a little better & be jobless less often, if at all...these features will be back & better for my having held off rushing them this time around...



David Hartley



Hartley's Righteous Rants

*And in the end, the love you take,
is equal to the love you make*
—The Beatles, 1969

Barack Obama's Election (November 4, 2008)

I cannot remember feeling this positive and optimistic about a President-elect, ever. This is an outstanding opportunity to unify and focus such a huge amount of enthusiasm into real movement. I am basking in the love, seriously I am.

There is potential for seismic shift of national identity. Not because he is bi-racial, although that is part of it. It is the accumulated emotional dystopia over the last 12 years that has split the American ego. Obama has the window of time to heal and bring us all together on higher ground. This window does not come often. Those great men who came before and made history—George Washington, above all others, walked away from enormous power, giving this country to the people and setting the world to a standard that made Obama possible; Abraham Lincoln who, through his guts, brains, and personal power, forced a solution to a growing and ultimately disastrous situation; and FDR, and possibly JFK too.

The significance of this day is not lost on me. I am awed at what is possible. The mental health and emotional well being of this country is nearing crisis point. Policy aside, he has the opportunity to bring empathy and unity towards a new and better society. I am reveling in this vision as I know you and millions of others are. We are perhaps on the verge of an evolutionary leap in social consciousness. I am not so cynical as to not be able to rejoice in this moment. I am giving 100% support to the new government for as long as I can.

Marijuana as Ancient and Modern Healer

A recent article at Slate.com¹ discusses what I have long suspected regarding the anti-bacterial property of cannabis. My own theory is sourced in the Bible of all places. Linguists have shown that the word *cannabis* is of Semitic origin and was unknown in Greek language, so in the translation from Aramaic/Hebrew to Greek, scribes incorrectly chose the word *calamus*, instead of cannabis. In the Old Testament, God gave the command to manufacture

¹ Amanda Schaffer, "High Expectations: Research into Medical Marijuana Grows up," <http://www.slate.com/id/2203922>

the holy anointing oil. God was very specific in those days. He said that myrrh, cinnamon, cassia, and the sweet fragrant flowers of calamus were to be distilled, as a perfumer would do, into olive oil. The formula was specific and is about four pounds of calamus flowers distilled with cinnamon and myrrh (many species of this now-extinct tree contain high levels of alkaloids, some of which are psychedelic like DMT) into two quarts of oil. An extremely potent concoction. God also imposed rules and regulations regarding the use and limits of this oil, as one would a powerful drug. One such rule is that it must be controlled by the priests and cannot be used outside temple or given to just anyone. This oil was used to anoint Christian priests and heal the sick of the Jewish elite.

Jesus Christ means the “anointed one.” One of his breaks with Jewish law occurred when he used the oil to heal the impoverished sick of leprosy and blindness and skin infections by pouring large amounts of this oil over them, and then after awhile plunging them into the river to wash off the remaining oil in a baptism. This must have been a very intense experience not only for the patient, but for anyone witnessing this event. Seeing God and having your disease cured in a single act of one man with a bottle of oil would be seen as a miracle, even today. I think that the holy anointing oil was a powerful drug of anti-bacterial, anti-viral, and psyche-altering properties. In this light, the Jesus story makes much more sense. Who could doubt he was the Son of God? Who would not follow him after witnessing these healing miracles and hearing about the cosmic consciousness attained by those so healed?

It is overwhelming to contemplate what the world would be like had these early Greek scribes used the correct word. How one little mistake in translation can totally alter the course of the world forever!

Cannabis was often used by most ancient Semitic tribes. There are large stone pots that are coated with burned cannabis resin and seeds. Archeological finds indicate that piles of cannabis flowers were burned in a tent or hut, like a smoke lodge.

Cannabis flowers are still offered as sacrament in this way by Ethiopian Coptic Christians, the earliest Christian sect, I believe, as well as possibly being descendants of one of the lost tribes of Israel.



Proposition 2: Thoughts on its Precedents and Future

I congratulate the people of California for recently passing Proposition 2.² This is the new law banning meat factory farming. This is another great day for animals and people and the environment. Everyone involved in this movement deserves a great deal of appreciation. It has been a long time coming. Although this law is a huge step forward, we still have a long way to go. Similar laws need to be enacted in every state to truly effect the changes that this law promises. If your state allows for ballot initiatives, get the petitions signed now. Or pressure your state representatives to enact similar legislation. If we do not continue to build on the momentum of Prop 2 across the states, all may be lost.

A bit of recent history for perspective. Proposition 215³ in California, which allowed for medical marijuana with a prescription, passed in 1996. It was brought before the Supreme Court in 2005 in *Gonzales vs. Raich*.⁴ This case is very similar in some key ways. Basically the case came down to neither medical nor marijuana issues. The government successfully prosecuted this law by a narrow majority because marijuana is hemp and hemp is a federally regulated crop (yes, banning is regulating). The regulation of marijuana is the same as wheat, corn, etc. The government contended that the legal growing of marijuana by individuals for their own use would undermine the federal price controls by reducing demand on black market marijuana. The government asserted that the purpose of the DEA is to maintain high street prices. This regulatory power falls under the commerce clause in the Constitution and has precedent in past cases where farmers were sued by the feds for using a small portion of their own wheat crop to make bread for their own consumption. It is twisted logic but this is what we are dealing with. *Stare decisis* (the principle in common law of adhering to precedent when deciding a legal case) can create some strange mutations of law over time.

As for the Court, the so-called liberal justices sided with the feds and the so-called conservative justices sided with California. Judge Thomas's dissenting statements for the

² The California Secretary of State's summary from the *Official Voter Information Guide* of Proposition 2 is as follows:

1. Requires that calves raised for veal, egg-laying hens and pregnant pigs be confined only in ways that allow these animals to lie down, stand up, fully extend their limbs and turn around freely.
2. Exceptions made for transportation, rodeos, fairs, 4-H programs, lawful slaughter, research and veterinary purposes.
3. Provides misdemeanor penalties, including a fine not to exceed \$1,000 and/or imprisonment in jail for up to 180 days. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proposition_2]

³ Proposition 215 added Section 11362.5 to the California Health and Safety Code, which:

1. Exempts patients and defined caregivers who possess or cultivate marijuana for medical treatment recommended by a physician from criminal laws which otherwise prohibit possession or cultivation of marijuana.
2. Provides physicians who recommend use of marijuana for medical treatment shall not be punished or denied any right or privilege.
3. Declares that the measure is not be construed to supersede prohibitions of conduct endangering others or to condone diversion of marijuana for non-medical purposes.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proposition_215 (1996)]

⁴ *Gonzales v. Raich* (previously *Ashcroft v. Raich*), 545 U.S. 1 (2005)

minority are, in my opinion, the correct and wiser opinions.⁵ Judge Stevens wrote a statement for the majority and, in my opinion, incorrectly placed the broad powers of federal regulatory agencies over the rights of individuals, human and civil rights, and over states' rights to regulate medicine and agriculture. The judges were unanimous in the opinion that the legislative branch is the place to enact and repeal these laws not the court.

I do not think people realize the full implications of this landmark case. If you grow corn in your garden you can be arrested, fined, and jailed by the Justice Department. Try to apply for farm subsidies to grow a dozen corn plants. If you do not, you are manufacturing illegal food. And you better sell that corn to a government certified business. Don't eat it yourself because if you do, you are undermining price controls. If you are a professional corn farmer, you are growing for the biggest yield per acre. You are paid by the weight of corn delivered to the storage facility. The quality and environmental impact of the corn, as well as the life of the farmer and the community and the greater society's future, are not considered. Farmers are forced to plant Monsanto's franken-corn and utilize machinery and chemicals on huge areas of land to stay in business at all. This corn is practically inedible to humans. It is used to make starch and high fructose corn syrup and animal feed.

I hope you see where I am going with this by now. The feds will prosecute this factory farm ban under the commerce clause. Even with a more conservative court Proposition 2 may very well fail based in part on the medical marijuana defeat. California still stands defiant against the feds over medical marijuana. The DEA still raids homes and dispensaries, seizing plants, etc. They just don't arrest anyone anymore for fear of risking another go round in court. This will not end without a national law defining a difference between marijuana and hemp, and providing support for individual rights and states' rights over federal regulations, where it is appropriate for the common good.

I would not wait for this new administration to act on this. I hope they do, but Clinton/Reno arrested way more patients and doctors than W.Bush/Ashcroft did. The Drug War is the first step towards a global police state. The War on Terror is the second.

The new factory farm bill will end up in court. When it does, and if it is defeated, things will probably be worse than they are now. Mega-Agra corporations will use this case to increase their powers. They will throw more money at this than we can ever hope to match. I think our only option is to pass similar laws in as many states as possible as quickly as possible, while pressuring Congress and the new President to pass laws that will stop this horrible abuse of animals, people, and the environment. Also support food labeling laws, like "contains genetically modified organisms" or, better yet, "this meat is part of an abused animal that suffered greatly its entire short life, and was cruelly slaughtered just before it would have died from corn poisoning."

If food was labeled so the consumer knew what they were eating and was given an alternative choice, things would be different. It is also important to re-legalize hemp as a crop for too many reasons to list if this article is to not become a book.

⁵ "Respondent's local cultivation and consumption of marijuana is not 'Commerce ... among the several States.' Certainly no evidence from the founding fathers suggests that 'commerce' included the mere possession of a good or some personal activity that did not involve trade or exchange for value. In the early days of the Republic, it would have been unthinkable that Congress could prohibit the local cultivation, possession, and consumption of marijuana." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gonzales_v._Raich]

Please, everyone interested in making this world a more sustainable and peaceful place, get involved now. We are not as unified as we could be and need to be. We are up against a systemic global economic and military machine that exists for exploitation of all, for money. We need to have the same singularity of purpose as they do if we are going to be effective. Let's watch closely the forces that will rise in opposition to Proposition 2. Follow the money back to the source and fight them as a united people exercising our last remaining rights in a focused movement of compassionate action. Love is more powerful than greed. Expressing love through thoughtful action will bring change.

Animals Out of Sight and Out of Mind

Who are we and what are we doing? Why do we do what we do? I don't know these answers, but I do know that that as people we do not maintain our personal ethics when it comes to the deeds we condone and support in the larger society. As individuals, we do not condone the killing, torture, and starvation of innocent people. Yet we not only tolerate it, we support it through our apathy and economic decisions. Every tank of gasoline is tainted with the blood of innocent men, women, and children. Every product we buy, whether it is green or not, is causing the ecosystem to deteriorate. All of our actions in our daily lives are destroying the environment. We are humans. We are technologically sophisticated but spiritually infantile. We have the power to correct many horrors that we have perpetrated upon this earth. We have the knowledge and the incentive to create a better and healthier world for ourselves and all of our fellow life forms. Oddly enough, we don't. Why? I believe we are simply not psychologically mature enough to make the necessary changes. We as a planetary people are narcissistic. Like a child who has not learned about empathy, compassion, sacrifice, and dedication, we move through our lives pursuing our individual self-interests. We exploit each other and nature to fulfill our endless desires. We in the modern West like to keep our dark side hidden from ourselves. It is easier to rationalize our sins when we don't have to see, touch, smell, and hear the results of it every day. Besides, there are many industries that prefer things that way. Out of sight, out of mind, which leads me to the topic of animal rights.

We have caused enormous amounts of habitat destruction for our suburbs and highways. Our careless and selfish impulses have devastated the native animal populations. Anyone seen an Eastern Bluebird lately? The eastern U.S. forests comprised mostly elms, the American Chestnut, red and white oak trees, and hickory. The all-too-common maple tree was not as common as it is now. The elm and the chestnut are all but extinct. And the oaks are not far behind. The chestnut tree was the major food source for most of the forest creatures as well as the Native American peoples. The animals have had to make due with acorns. Now acorns too are becoming scarce. Who plants oak trees any more? We need to have a large program to bring back the elms and the chestnut and find a cure for the oak tree fungus. Just a few heroic and dedicated individuals are doing this work. The largest cultivated crop in America by far is lawn grass. We need to think about everything we do as individuals but, more importantly, we need to pass sensible laws and put programs in place to replenish the natural food sources of our forests for the animals and our selves.

Americans consume ten billion pounds of animals every year. Most people do not realize what is happening to those thinking, feeling animals. Most of them are mammals like us. Yet they are not treated differently from other non-living manufacturing industry resources. Their exploitation is beyond cruel. The conditions and the lives of these creatures are far worse than death. These are not a few rogue facilities; these are standard practices in the food industry. I am not going to go into specifics here. The informational documents, videos etc. are available from multiple sources. Be prepared to be shocked. I am warning you now, be careful. On the other hand, if you can't watch it, don't eat it. After viewing the standard legal operating procedures of modern livestock raising and processing, I am left traumatized, without exaggerating that term. I have had nightmares and a constant and gnawing anger over the failure of the government and the industry to address even the most egregious of practices. The meat lobby is very powerful. It is all about money. They do not seem to care for the health and welfare of people or the environment, never mind the animals they torture. You really can't imagine what is happening out there. Things have changed drastically for the worse in the last few decades. The old barn and pen and pasture have been replaced with buildings and machines in colossal indoor meat manufacturing plants. The whole process is secretive and closely guarded from the public's right to know. Livestock animals are not covered under any humane or cruelty laws like dogs and cats are. What laws do exist are to protect the meat product, not the animals. Very dangerous for the workers, not to mention the stress. It saddens me and gives my belief in the ethical, fair, and moral nature of the American people a serious challenge. Like I said earlier, who are we?





Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Many Musics

(Third Series, continued)

*"Out here on the perimeter
there are no stars*

Out here we is stoned . . . immaculate"

—The Doors, "The Wasp (Texas Radio & the Big Beat)," 1971.

xxxi. Dead End

I ask: wherefrom? No. Ask again: whither on?
No, worse. Ask: why the best of many centuries
but ghosts in books, their light & lives offered in
mere songs of endurance, begging to be remembered?
I ask: has anything changed but the slaves' names
& the kinds of toil? I ask, lastly, if the dust
blowing past is for burial or new spark?

xxxii. Siguriya

When you begin to elude fear & doubt hope,
heed what oncomes, despite.
When you nod with others in the amber-smoked
room, avoid what pulsates, what lures,
want unsated, these many centuries of men.
When some year, some quietly violent hour
comes that you reck the trees new, all
beauty, but no example, save endurance.
When whose lean near who offer an answer
in cards, coins, patterns of stars, the shape
shit steams on the earth, what wonder in man.
When the faces cackle too many nights
in drink, in waiting, in calling wisdom
what tickles the skin, the rest is music.
When there is no solid ground, when
not even music, old sure friend, then
sleep, wager the remain in dreams.

xxxiii. When Nothing Else

I know I share with you that hour
 when you too were abandoned,
 somewhere a nod, a phone call, a reason
 or two enough. You walked through streets
 too, beneath stars, quiet despairing,
 the answer not now or ever to come why.
 Time passed, new fruit grew, but always
 now that tinge of something, that linger,
 that slim fissure of sad. Tell it in words
 tonight tells nothing. What you know &
 the less for it, what I know & struggle around.
 Something else too, this nod between us,
 this empathy we could brew like a tea,
 this breathing, this endurance, this crack between hearts.

xxxiv. Endurance

Dust, a violent hour, endurance. Crack
 between hearts, a silence, like a burial
 in breath. Tonight trembles sweetly to one
 touch, salts blindly another's eyes. Violent
 hour, dust, endurance. Tonight reck the
 remaining bones of a belief, of a love, reck
 what green rides old cracks high. Endurance,
 violent hour, dust. What rises with the light,
 what crosses the moon, what sings shores
 empty of men tonight, a wish, a riddle, a truth.

xxxv. Imaginal Space

What rises with the light, crosses the moon,
 what sings shores empty of men tonight,
 a wish, a riddle, a sooth. A moving spaced,
 a moveable space. Call it imaginal space.
 One music, many musics, the porous ground
 to any staying cry of human truth.

Tonight reck the remaining bones of any
 belief, any love, any fire not fed by
 the hour. Reck what green rides old
 cracks high, what oncomes a torrent,
 violent hours. Endurance. Dust. The dreams
 their caterwaul but who would listen?

Call it imaginal space, the shifting crack
 between hearts, a wish, a riddle, sooth.
 One music, many musics. Asked what tool is
 this, say what needed? A salve, a meal,
 knowing the tongue of the galaxies themselves?
 The challenge is to see tonight's glowing door

by the morrow's plain light, see, & step through.

xxxvi. Imaginal Space (ii)

Toward the morrow's plain light,
 the bursts of darkness along its hours,
 the finely strummed gestures rent by
 a fumbled faith in mystery. A trip back
 into the junk of common truths. Common
 truths, able to brick up a wall or
 score a small rift of power. Common truths,
 bursts of darkness. When the lace is shed,
 behold an easy wet cunt or a lightning to ride through?

xxxvii. Long Exhaust

If I had, because I loved you, because
 you possessed, if I had, the night crackling
 with your crimson scent, if, the year a leaden
 one for men even as every youth burned high,
 nearer, nearer, the mystery of that room
 you slept in, plush & posters & icons to denial,
 now hush as I do, & sweet that you are,
 another room of voices as we, but call this
 my hour, hush, no denial, hush, no lost
 years, hush, youth most like the gods of men,
 for a moment our hearts crack & time itself burns.

xxxviii. Tonight's Questions

Why electrify an animal with consciousness?
 Why point his eyes toward the stars as he shits?
 Why make fucking the stuff of grunt & prayer?
 Why let him speak knowing in lies & truths?
 Why the rift from nature, urge to know, consume?
 Why the dread path to demise with dreams of escape?

xxxix. Electricity

Offered the elixir, you drink, & now
the stars familiar & the trees shaman.
Her body living starlight to the touch &
the farthest dreams close upon this petal.
This petal, this moment, this forever
moment & the music consumes you.
The water she feeds you crackles with
knowing, the grass is friend, the drums
every heart's glad yearning tongue. Come
morning, the daylight of get & shove,
the hole in hours burned by coins,
& explained by some men as penance,
as test, as deferred promise for someday's
great, golden land of light. Come
morning & you wonder: "what is it
for? Should I have drunk? Come
morning, something's missing, important,
it was there last night, in her
crystalline smile, in the moment when
you forgave all, knew all was well,
breathed, relaxed. Missing . . . missing?
You've drunk the elixir, you are awake
now, walk the earth, sober or laughing,
til you find it, or were wrong, & let go.

xl. The Stars, While Shitting

In desert, the far blowing desolation
hearts know, squat in plastic box,
thumping sounds of immolation & ecstasies
without, I sat with a puzzling book
& read its first lines. Suffer, it said,
this is why you suffer, this canquer
of want in you, each of you, name
it a god of devil, this is why
you suffer, that you live from first
cry riven & crawl your years to be
whole, that you cry up love into
myth to keep it a step away, that
you litigate desire for its blind,
brutal wish, build great towers & temples
of distraction, cage your every last soul
in discontent, in bitterest hunger,
this is why you suffer. My shit
came sudden & raw & the plastic ceiling
above my head exploded, the stars
fell in on me, I was a moment
so beautiful & dead. Yes, this is why
we suffer, for the shattering moment
when nothing makes sense, & we finally nod.

xli. Grunt & Prayer

I moved inside her, a little deeper,
 a little harder. She grunted, liked
 it hard, liked it to hurt, "yes,
 hurt, oh make it hurt, hurt me,
 make me forget, love me, consume me,
 crush my tits, harder, deeper,
 consume me, I want it, oh yes,
 oh yes!" I withdrew a little, young,
 what had I loosed? What demons risen
 here, this darkened small room,
 the dinner half-eaten on the table,
 the moonlight radiant & mad through
 the single window, above the brick
 wall. What demons, I pull back
 & she breathes hard. "Who are you?"
 "Just fuck me." "Who are you?"
 "Just fuck me!" Ten, twenty years
 dissolves, thirty, forty one day soon,
 & I still wonder who was she that
 night? Which she do I mean? Which
 night? Breathe heavy remembering,
 breathe sad. I want it. I want it too.

xlii. Lies & Truths

The last time on phone, my father
was lost to space & time, raving
in hospital bed, waving his legless
stumps around while nurses murmured
& checked numbers. He cried into
the phone how we'd fight them
together, the bastards, the enemies,
the ones keeping us far. The ones
who had not told him this is how it
would end, this drowning, this
ravaging despair, this freak tempest
of professional eyes, this humiliation,
this taking & taking & taking. I think
of him now, bones in the earth, free
of time & pain & all he loved. Were his
life's truths any softness beneath those
last hours? The truths, the loves,
the promises vowed to someday?
I wonder, & I wish I could have
given him a warm hand on his cheek,
a word of comfort, everything is alright,
& this is a lie, & this is truth.

xliii. Rift from Nature

There were moments, maybe three,
maybe fewer, when I uncoiled
back to root, into soil, into sunshine,
exhaled, & again, the world we
are drinking each other, the world
we lay in wordless song dreaming
at night, the world, the wings
inside my ribs, the web between
my toes, uncoiled through clouds
when I rained, fruit I was eaten
& shit seed back to earth. Moments
when the stars too were like fruit,
hanging impossibly from endless skies,
& what was left of me danced & died,
& what I was, & what I possessed,
& what made the world, & no reason why.

xliv. Dread Path

Tonight's hungers are new & old, every
 face wears them, & looks to another
 to explain. Cities crackle by the sparkling
 crowds pushing shouting into taverns,
 & those awaiting a last hour, & those
 fearing a familiar voice & its knowing
 hand. Tonight's hungers range canyon &
 jungle, green sea & white woods, &
 some fill bellies & some fuck whatever sweet
 they may. Tonight's hungers left us by
 a combustible god, or molecule, or
 alien starparent. Tonight the taverns
 ever more crowded, the rhythms beastier,
 the clothes tighter, the words exchanged
 more plain. Tonight's hungers draw
 us nearer the end, by weapon, by evolution,
 by the return of whoever let us down
 here, seeming bid to wonder & wait,
 or by obscurest thought hurling heart's
 shadows that nothing's to wait for,
 everything's to be done, we are the tinder
 that needs gathering, & the ignition.

xlvi. Hope

To be gaming in dreamspace, ever,
 but not yet in this world or life. Mixing
 the aerie hours with blunt whoring for coin
 gets little for either. What needs is
 better transit through daylight's coarse
 simple rhythms toward escalating swim
 in nocturnal waters. What's needed by day
 is hope & this needless by any moon.
 Douse the world in it & ignite, if I could.
 Douse the world, let daylight & evening
 finally merge together in a new glow.

xlvi. Despair

The worst of it was years ago, shitty bar,
 shitty jukebox, shitty drinks. A naked Santa
 on the corner Christmas tree. She tells me
 the pills make it hurt less, with steaming
 blue eyes, a soul of glowing auto wreck.
 She was young, she tells me, it felt like love
 because it was so hard & so often. Panties
 down, against the couch. Her glass empties
 & fills again. Feeling something's good, right?

xlvi. Imaginal Space (iii)

A moving space. Moveable space.
 Bursts of darkness. What tools & materials
 gone at daybreak, what pisses blandly
 from dreams. What hope could douse
 the world if any? Feeling something's
 good, right? Bursts of darkness, what
 tools to work it over, what materials
 to shade & shape it new, moving
 space, moveable space. What subtle
 flees from crowds of men, din of markets?
 Tonight I do not know & bend like a
 young branch in cold sea gusts, listening.

xlvi. And If—

And if all these things do, indeed, exist?
 Her frayed green sweater in that roseate
 light? His tumbling laughter at an image
 on the computer screen? What festers
 & mosses between these floors? The man who
 lived here a century ago, when this coffeehouse
 was just a maze of dirty rooms, his long
 nights of prayer for healing, crazed willing
 to take his disease the faster if God
 would just give a word back? Just one?
 If all these things do, indeed, exist?
 Then any blazing day of unity, any final
 calling of all hands to one, any
 let go & release to the universal music
 must be rooted in the withering suffering
 & sometime ecstasies of all who lived brief
 or long yet fell a day or an hour just short.

xlix. Empathy

Love's long blind reach into the dark—
 I become one with your grief,
 with your caterwaul, your moment's
 heated fancy—I call this empathy
 & remember a story years back—

We were both close to homeless, him
 in a mobile home, me in a rooming house—
 it was near Christmas, we sat together
 on a bench—we talked about love,
 about what falls away with clothes, what doesn't—

The last time I saw him was a bookstore,
 a cold night, been a brilliant day &
 now long disappeared—yet—I told him
 my fleeing beloved had written, had not
 forgotten—touched his hands, we smiled,
 agreed all things are possible—

I remember now by your absence—
 by the vagueness of who you were—
 I remember because most flakes away
 false—that beloved, no truer than
 many others—but that hour, friend,
 smile between us, touched hands—
 I am still reaching, too, for better and worse.

l. Betrothed

Had you known me as the sloppy wildcat
 of my youth, I could have explained
 less & more. My love for you then'd been more
 like caterwauling blades than a dreaming's
 ceaseless strange engine. I look around
 more often now, than up. You remind
 me to look up. City's glare, heart's
 old noises, those griefs, *keep looking up*.

li. High on Labyrinth

How narrow the faith to forecast despair
 for all, call the world old, doomed,
 explain suffering by one dead prophet's
 return or the collapse of all history
 to one single ignited moment. Plant-eaters,
 icon-kneelers, hustlers of endtime terrors,
 feel the doubt glare through you from
 chandeliered skies above, feel your thick tomes
 & devilled costumery break by centuries,
 break by the long cry each new voice
 echoes on, break by the hope each heart
 bears, no matter the darkness setting in.

lii. Counter-mythos

Dust a violent hour, endurance. This
 is why you suffer. Failure to feel your
 suffering in my heart, breach the lies
 of kings & preachers, the market's easy delight
 in slinging new ass. Strange need to call
 for love, for calm, as though a soul needs
 be convinced to breathe, to sup. That man
 in tatters before you, swaying for a coin,
 that woman crouched & weeping, armies
 praying tonight for a god's nod on the morrow,
 dust, a violent hour, endurance. The many
 calls to despair, to gird better one's treasures.
 This is why you suffer. Ignore the world's
 many fecund puzzles, the green oncoming despite,
 despair & fall. Now down, nearly
 gone, reckon that breathing earth, beneath
 grass or concrete. Cry up a little song
 of hope in its rhythms, by your own beats.

liii. Tuning the Static

When passing water this morning I thought
 of you passing yours. Torrents of blood,
 hidden waterfalls, the very key to the world
 found in summing all & dividing by one.

liv. Deep Space

One late night I will be gone, it will be
 hours or years later. My books have crumbled,
 my deeds blurred. What I was tonight, writing
 as though never to cease, breaching my
 heart for music to salve & share, become
 bones & dust, & the final opening of this
 path from a few mad cracking years
 to what it feels like to dream forever.

lv. Persist

What it feels like to dream forever, undo
 hook of want in the blood, years' ache
 of inner tides, push, pull, breach further,
 a sensation not yet flown in song, other
 hustles among coin & ass, for the rhythms
 that bed bedding bodies, know, become,
 the hand which tosses the seeds, what not
 taught or told, the map before the pathways laid.

lvi. Map Before

Would knowing help, watching that day again
 walk itself through? Remember: heart's unspent
 music bound for colliding with that hour.
 The breath before, the decision to go. Laughter.
 You came as one, left as another. Hungers so
 long held, long shaped, a new mold, now
 perhaps a new stuff entirely! Nearing, yes,
 you are nearing, the word, the glance,
 colors & breath mass into a name, a jacket,
 a vehicle. How God & dreams look to another.
 You are young, the nights immortal. Even the talk
 of trifles excite you. Give back this hour?

lvii. Imaginal Space (iv.)

It would be the same for any god,
 nothing learned in the hundreds kneeling
 or mouthing the sacred songs. Nothing found
 in face smiling to face on the high holiday,
 the cheerful choirs, the best-washed virgins
 smoothly singing of sin & penance & the fine
 thoughts of each in his or her creased white
 uniform, blessed be, blessed be, blessed alway.

Fumble down into the mystery, the careening
 hungry hour, flesh gnawing for flesh,
 & one god a thousand thousand miles away,
 & another near, so near, that hand's knowing
 touch on skin, the laugh & cry in shedding
 clothes, feel that god as the breathing twins,
 as sinews bind hearts, the few words,
 love, hard, touch, how the god would learn.

What rises with next light, stained & crumpled
 uniforms, blessed be, blessed be, blessed alway.
 Was it sin or new love or a darling good fuck?
 The god would listen to the words as
 limbs untangle, a breast to its harness,
 a cock into its sheath. Uncertain words,
 because that moment, those sacred songs,
 the strange way each & all bind & undo so easily.

lviii. Imaginal Space (v.)

Nothing unbinds again, space conjured is space
 real, no matter the bursts of darkness,
 the diminishing years, how touch hungers
 & sates & mercifully forgets. I know
 nothing & keep learning to sing. Nothing unbinds
 again, the lesson of drowned woods & old hearts.

lix. Blood on Canvas

Bells ring, little, nothing. Ring again,
 & a drum, & another. Something beats,
 something breathes, there is movement
 if not yet dancing. I ask the Universe:
 why suffering? Why music? Bells ring,
 & the drums, & someone speaks a word.

Bells ring, little, nothing. World bides its
 wicked, calls them preachers, crowns
 them kings. Rings again, & perhaps an
 organ, a sooth where it hurts, where
 the fist, the slur, the silence. I ask
 the Universe: why want when so many
 lonely beds? Why hunger when the world
 bulges with stores? I ask, & someone speaks a word.

Bells ring, someone speaks a word, &
 begins to lie. Explain, & lie. Exhort
 to principle & promise, & lie. Cry we
 are one! then parts the temple, &
 its song. Bells ring, someone speaks a word,
 perhaps to sing, & now the lies are
 crooned through music. Suffer, these
 strange songs say. In all glory, suffer!

I ask the Universe: why suffering, &
 why its glorious songs? Someone speaks
 a word, as though to explain, & another
 lie. Bells ring, little, less. Kindness
 most binds but many would not be
 so bound. Bells ring, all listen, clear air
 ripples, sunshine plays out the minutes.
 Someone speaks a word, the moment again divides.

lx. Imaginal Space (vi.)

I ask the Universe: why suffering?
 Why music? & behold this world my answer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RS', followed by the date '12-13-2008' and a flourish.

Jim Burke III



Editor's Note: The following is the twenty-seventh in an ongoing series derived from the correspondence between Jim Burke III and myself, begun in 1992, and in the spirit of the more enthused letter-writing tradition of yesteryear.

October 15, 2008
Backyard
Meadowbrook Rd.
West Hartford, Ct.

Dear Ray,

The timing of your last letter¹ was amazing. I was trying to combine my latest notion of perception, intellect, discrimination of those two, and finally, of course, reality. When the social and natural sciences collide, an attempt is invariably made to qualify quantitative data, and vice versa. The social individual is absorbed into the mass, or the collective consciousness. This makes up for all the major components for our culture (unfortunately as can be seen by studying the legal and ethical systems, not all these components are justifiable in their present state of use; i.e. existence of the death “penalty”). However, we must fight the change of reality that is cast on us like a shadow. Each of us needs to step into the sun, as an individual, and express ourselves freely and in right conduct. It is the obligation of every person, possessing of intellect and perception, to channel his or her reality back to the mass and to keep them in check, perhaps even help the mass. I know now that not a day will elapse ever again when I am not practicing an art form. It is our responsibility to do this and let the mass know.

Such individuals as Henry David Thoreau can see that such right conduct (art, music) takes one to a high level of being. For him, such perception and behavior resulted in being jailed for refusing to pay his taxes. Since he intuitively knew that government as an arbiter of cultural norms was imprecise at best, he decided not to support it. Thoreau then came to the remarkable conclusion that the walls of the jail he was confined to, while serving their noble intended purpose, also kept people away and gave him a degree of solitude. Ah! What a bargain for not paying your tax. He preferred solitude for lengthy periods of time, and his best-known work, *Walden*,² outlines his reality. His reality was tempered by his thoughts on companionship: “I have one chair for myself, two for company, and three for society.” Thoreau also proposed that solitude is the best companion available. I use Thoreau as an example of how we can combat the mass reality. He rejected government and its manifestations, participated in culture, but stayed outside it all consistently. He got through it all, just as you did, just I did. He would ask any visitor, while he was jailed, why that

¹ “From Soulard’s Notebooks,” *The Cenacle* | 66 | October 2008.

² Taken from *Reflections at Walden*, Hallmark Cards, Inc., 1968, p. 31.

person was not on the same side of the bars as him. This is why going from job to job seems unavoidable. Your letter, and also the commentary in a previous issue of *The Cenacle*³ showed how a period of six years, from leaving a place of joy and then returning to the place, can be filled with inward turmoil of the individual versus the collective realities. I have been through that and artistic discrimination needs to be used to solve the collision. Just as the Hindu Brahmin study the *Bhagavad Gita* and live their lives by right conduct as an intentional instrument, so we move further on. Artistic pursuit is the solution to the human equation. So many ancient civilizations gave up this notion and are now extinct. Their mistake was to equate art with possession, rather than pure truth. Pure truth transcends mass reality and cannot be destroyed. Pure truth includes spiritual concepts. These concepts do not exist on the physical plane (not to be confused with the act of meditation—that is engaging in right conduct with a useful art form). I play the guitar and make the music, and then I realize I am the music. I have had eight jobs in my field of social services and having been fired, laid off, demoted, quit and, on one occasion, been subjected to an investigation for conduct “contrary to the agency’s mission” (smoking a J at lunch in the parking lot—I guess their mission was to prevent employees from smoking Js at lunch), I got through it all by being. I shed all the demons from one job, one location, and found a re-charge. On every occasion when they built up around me, I moved on. Sometimes it took a while and after twenty years of this career, I decided to become self-employed, including selling records.

After I was “laid off” from my last job three plus years ago, I knew that “being” would counteract the demons set on me by the mass reality I had managed to stay outside for the first fifty-two years of my life. This was *the bus I hopped on*⁴ and have stayed on since. That phrase was the link to how I have stayed there, and a spiritual insight that I would like very much to share with you.

As art and pure truth are absolute, so is the rejection of the mass reality. Einstein solved the mystery surrounding light, but he didn’t go far enough. If one takes the equation $E=MC^2$ (Energy is equal to Mass times the [Constant] speed of light squared) and uses some math, the result is: $E=MC^2 \therefore \frac{E}{M}=C^2 \therefore \sqrt{\frac{E}{M}}=C$.⁵⁶ The speed of light is isolated and so is the universal speed limit. The $\sqrt{\frac{E}{M}}$ can never approach an object moving at the speed of light, IN THIS REALITY.

It is time to move on from my previous statement that we all become stars when we die. Perhaps it just needs to be sharpened since it was a statement based on intuitive insight after examining the cosmos while still in the mass reality.

The generally accepted theory about how the universe was formed includes the notion of the “big bang” (with no apologies whatsoever to those religions who believe “God” did). It was so incredibly hot that an enormous explosion occurred. In fact, it was hotter than possible *when in this physical universe* and mathematically called undefined or, more commonly, a singularity. I have often found the term as a clever way for a mathematician to explain away a big hole in the structure of physical science. The first time I was given the

³ “From Soulard’s Notebooks,” *The Cenacle* | 64 | June 2008.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Albert Einstein

⁶ $\therefore$ means *therefore*

equation 5/0 to solve, there was always five remaining after starting out with nothing. However, if you use imaginary numbers, which is a legitimate branch of mathematics, you can turn any equation, like this one, into a singularity. The singularities exist, *outside of the physical plane*. They are reachable for those of us who exist outside this plane comprising the mass reality.

Part II
Reservoir #3

A human being is born, as we know, after a nine-month gestation period. Physical energy is transferred from the mother to the fetus. When birth takes place, the soul is *tabula rasa*⁷ and will be influenced by events to come. However, there is a point in one's life where energy is stored by acting in right conduct, participating in the truth, pursuing art, and all of the above. The individual decides what is intrinsically sound and what is not. The time of this decision varies from individual to individual, and in some cases (perhaps in most) does not happen at all. Mahatma Gandhi started when he was about thirty years old. I started at about 54. The point is that a transformation from the physical to the compilation of spiritual being takes place. Every day that I live is now devoted to my family, and spiritual maintenance. It is at this juncture that I part with traditional physicists. Einstein's relativity theory and, more recently, Stephen Hawking's attempt to unify quantum mechanics and gravity, are only concerned with the physical universe and cannot justify traveling faster than light because the amount of energy required to do so is unobtainable, *in this universe*. However, when one adds the spiritual energy accumulated during an individual's lifetime, we exceed the speed of light at the moment of physical death and the *collective* energy melds into a revelation of cosmic reality. The mass reality found in the physical universe is ignored and cast aside totally. An important point: by collective energy, I mean not only from an individual's accumulation, but also from all individuals' accumulation and contribution that is ongoing. *We all* become stars when we die, not only on an individual basis. The important distinction to be made is that the individual and the collective are polar opposites when comparing the physical and spiritual (metaphysical and beyond) levels of existence. There can be no causality on a spiritual plane. Truth *is*. Reality *is*. Duality can be studied by juxtaposing the physical and spiritual planes, but certainly not *within* the latter.

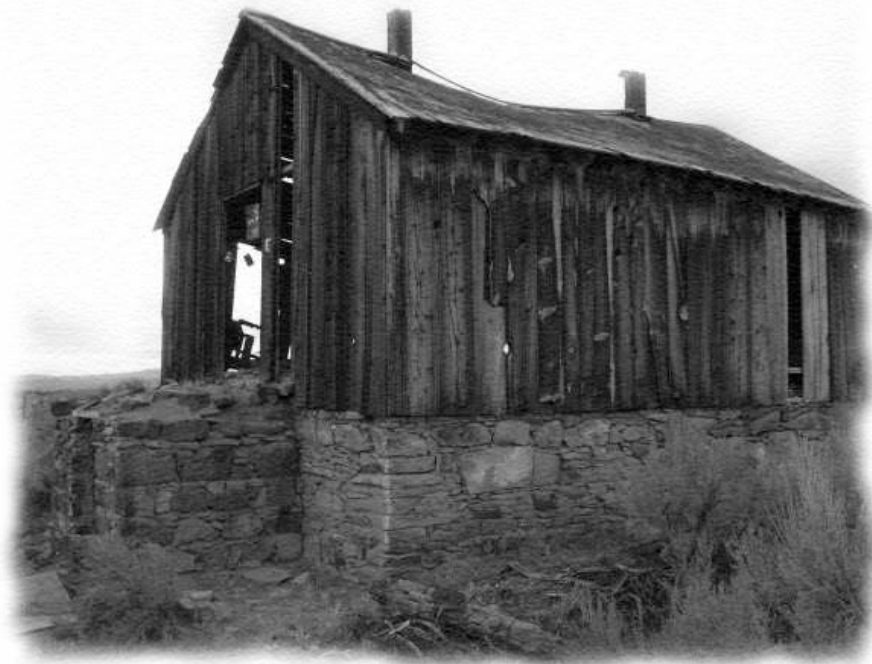
My argument here encapsulates the tragedy that this country and the world has recently been through, especially during the last eight years. The chance for humanity to use its spiritual forces for its own betterment has been utterly wasted. There is very little, if anything, positive that can be noted from the present administration's last eight years in office. History will be the ultimate mirror for mankind to reflect on how terrible these people *really* were. It has all been said and will be repeated. This country learned nothing from Vietnam and supported a war initially that eventually was proven (and even admitted by George W. Bush) to have been started by this country. Although the circumstances were suspect from the beginning at best, and eventually shown to have been falsified deliberately, to start a war is an unimaginable horror. It is so unthinkable that our government would

⁷ Latin for *blank slate*

permit this that I have now made a conscious decision to withdraw from the manifestation of the wrong conduct of others, including those of our government. I demand the truth. I always have, but now I will act on it!

I will contribute all my energy while I am alive on the physical plane and convert it to the spiritual collective when I die. There are many of us on this planet and I think intuitively many others throughout the galaxies. Every so often, more so now than originally theorized, the suns we become explode and the dust is released, traveling in part back to this planet in the form of the light from what is classified as a supernova. Technology allows us to look back in time and see the light from long ago. When enough of the stardust eventually reaches our Earth, the evolution will occur. Each one of us will “pass on” and from that point forward, not only will we all become stars when we die, but the stars will become us. As John Lennon said: **IMAGINE!**

Love + Love
To all

Photograph by Victor Vanek | Design by Cassandra Soulard

Judih Haggai



Notes on How to Go On

one breath
 one small step
 a little dusting
 a polish, a broom
 a sudden cookie sheet
 magimix to get me through this minute
 a chocolate bar to compose into chips
 one stir
 one mix
 one short flick of a switch
 i cry
 i sing to the whirl of the batter
 i am
 i do
 this i can continue
 i am a giver of joy
 i pledge this joy to you
 every happy face
 will be yours in cookie mode
 you will live in every crunch of every delicious mouthful
 of every mouth that crunches
 this i can do
 this i can do
 my love i give to you
 i will always give

the way out is the way in
 turn, turn, turn
 an upside -down solution
 to an unsolvable question
 inside out, mother fo
 yeah, i said it, ya muther fa
 no, i don't mean maybe
 it's this way, and out the back door
 no lord, no sweet lord, no mantra chanting lord
 no
 they went thataway,
 the gods and goddesses of yesterday
 put on some bling
 some kitsch
 some instanteous dish
 some miso in a macrobiotic point of view
 and off they went
 how do i know?
 i just go

when tragedy strikes
 mind whirls, constant humming
 waves askew, sound too much treble
 overtones jar
 i'm reeling for a friend
 real friend, real sad
 she's grieving
 and i say how to go on
 i know snow falls
 and i'm wishing i could feel it
 snow falls, life goes on
 simple cycles go on
 pushing for an om moment
 to go on

torch in cave wall
i see the writing left by others
hold focus, you can survive this
it all will pass
one minute at a time
we all did it
you can do it
listen to us sing
we did it
you can too

my battery's on full
battery may be smaller
my intentions are on high
expectations may be amorphous
body's ticking forward
tipping over
all's accounted for
what's a tooth, or a hair pigment?
it's all good
it's all i got!
going on



Ralph H. Emerson

C & G: Gobbling Gutturals

To understand the letter C, we must also talk about the letter G, which shares, if not its sound, at least its shape, history, and meaning. The Romans used only the “hard” sounds of these letters, the ones in *gobble* and *copper*, “guh” and “kuh.” The “soft” sounds in *gem* and *center* are newer and less typical, and we’ll ignore them for now. As we go along, keep in mind that hard C can also be spelled K or Q, as in *cub*, *kitten*, *quail*, and that s- can precede any one of these letters, as in *(s)cowl*, *(s)kill*, *(s)quish*. These minor disguises aside, the guttural “kuh” and “guh” are easy and important sounds in human languages; and in not-so-human ones, too, for crows *caw*, and dogs say *grrr*.

They’re easy sounds because they come right from the throat, Latin *guttur*, whence their old name *gutturals*. Modern linguists prefer the term *velar*, pronounced “veeler,” but the older name really clues us in better, because a great many guttural words frankly concern the *gullet* or its opening the ‘mouth’. A second great family of velar words, just as big and nearly as important, concerns *skin* and other ‘surfaces’. Of the two sounds, G is slightly more mouthy and C more surfacey, but in broad terms they are quite interchangeable; and both letters share so many semantic subsets that we will need two essays to handle them all. This first essay is devoted to ‘mouth’ words. (*Editor’s Note: the second essay is scheduled to appear in the April 2009 Cenacle*).

Velars are like guard dogs: noisy, dangerous, and fascinating, but not very bright. You see them all over the world, always doing exactly the same sorts of things. A big smile, for example, is a *grin* in English, *gelasma* in ancient Greek, and *gerenyeng* in Indonesian, each hard *g* loyally followed by an *r* or *l*. There are also some amazing parallels between velar ‘mouth’ words like *grin* and analogous M and N ‘mouth’ words like *(s)mile*. That’s why a *mouth* is also called a *gob*, why a *kiss* is a *smooch*, why *snatching* is the same as *grabbing*, *munching* like *crunching*, *moans* like *groans*, and why *nooks* always hang out with *crannies*. I’ll refer to these parallels often, so once again keep in mind the technical terms for these letters: M and N are *nasals*, and C and G are *velars*.

Squawk!

The throatiness of C and G has hardly gone unnoticed. Charles de Brosses called G “the letter of the throat” as long ago as 1765, and all the words for ‘throat’ line up to agree: *gullet*, Latin *guttur*, German *Gurgel*, Russian *gorlo*, Romance *gorge*, *gola*, *garganta*. Those are all onomatopoeic, just like *cough*, *gag*, *gasp*, *gargle*. Throaty noises made by birds are onomatopoeic too: turkeys *gobble*, roosters *cock-a-doodle-doo*, hens *cluck* and *cackle*; ducks *quack*, pigeons *coo*, and as we noted above, crows *caw*. But crows also *crow*, and many languages besides our own use this same *c-r* combination in the name of that bird: Dutch *kraai*, Japanese *karasu*, Greek *korōnē*, Latin *cornix*. Other birds named for their cries are

cuckoos, geese, gulls, grouse, quail, crakes, cranes, cormorants, and gannets, not to mention chirpy crickets and croaking French *grenouilles* ‘frogs’. Croaky human voices are *gruff* and *gravelly*, and throaty caveman sounds are *growls*, *groans*, *grumbles*. High-pitched noises are *calls*, *cries*, *keens*, *squeals*, *squawks*, *screeches*, *screams*. And of course such *garrulous* ‘mouth’ words as *gush*, *gab*, and *gossip* refer to actual ‘language’, which evolved, as Paul Bloom put it, “From *Grunting* to *Grammar*.”¹

Besides making noise, our mouths display our moods. Nasal and velar words alike span the whole range from *merry* to *morose* and *glad* to *gloomy*. Happy people are *giddy* and *gleeful*; they *grin* and *giggle* and *guffaw*. Unhappy people—oh, my! They *scowl* and *grimace*; *quarrel* and *squabble*, *gripe* and *grouse*, *carp* and *kvetch*. They *cry* and *grieve* and hold *grudges*. They’re *disgruntled*, *cranky*, *crabby*, *grumpy*. Aren’t those old people’s words? *Grumpy Old Men* was a movie, and Maureen Dowd called someone a “*grumpy grampy*.” Dagwood’s neighbor is “old Mr. *Grundy*”; another comic features a Mrs. *Grunch*. Old ladies are *crows*, *crones*, *grannies*, *gorgons*, *gargoyles*; old men are *crocks*, *goats*, and *geezers*. Our *geriatric* and *gerontology* come from the hard-g Greek *gerōn* ‘old man’. German slang for ‘old man’ is *Greis*, and French is *scrogneugneu*.

Don’t be a *Grinch*, don’t be a *Scrooge*! Dr. Seuss’s Grinch has a “Grinchy frown,” and Ron Howard, director of a recent movie about the Grinch, called him an “irascible *grouch*,” a “lovable *grump*.” (His interviewer from the *Hartford Courant* favored “*crotchety*” and “green *curmudgeon*.”) The Grinch is obviously based on Dickens’s Scrooge, but did you know that Scrooge had his own velar predecessor? One of the characters in Dickens’s early Pickwick stories was a Christmas-hating grave-digger named *Gabriel Grub*, a “surly, *cross-grained* fellow” with a “*scowl* of malice.” Scrooge is all of that, and a miser too—*grumpy* and *grabby*!

Greedy

Velars specialize in appetite. Rudyard Kipling said the letter G looks like an open mouth, the emblem for its “greedy Ga-sound.” That’s about right. Dr. Doolittle’s hungry pig is *Gub-Gub*, and the guy in *Wall Street* who says “Greed is good!” is *Gordon Gekko*. Professional eaters are *gluttons*, *gourmets*, *gourmands*, and *gastronomes*. They idolize *gustus* ‘taste’, whence *gusto*, *goût*, and *gustatory*; and they like quantity. Kitchen goddess Nigella Lawson prefers big portions and “a *groaning* board”—not from “*greed*” or “*gluttony*,” she says, but simply because “I like my cup overflowing” with “*gorgeous* abundance and *generous* hospitality”. A less subtle gourmet, the champion hot-dog eater Takeru Kobayashi, “*gorged*, and *gulped*, and nearly *gagged*” while “*gobbling* a world record 50½ franks.”²

Scarfig and *guzzling* are apt to give you a big *gut*, so “the fat man” in *The Maltese Falcon* is named Casper *Gutman*. Fiction routinely uses G names to imply ‘unusually big’. Honor Tracy’s *Settled in Chambers* has a *Fatty Gurney*, a “plump” *Gerda*, and a “voluptuous” *Nelia Gluck*. Fitzgerald’s *Tender Is the Night* has a “huge” yachtsman named *Golding*, and his *Great Gatsby* is about a man who is figuratively *great* and *grand*. Some G’s are giants: *Goliath* in the Bible, *Gulliver* among the Lilliputians, Gulliver’s giant nurse *Glumdalclitch* in Brobdingnag,

¹ In Arabic, ‘speech’ is *kalām*; ‘confess’ is *qarr*, ‘recite’ is *qiri*, and ‘recitation’ is *Qur’ān*, the Koran.

² *New York Times*, June 25, 2003

Godzilla in the movies, and *God* in Heaven. The adjective *gargantuan* is from Rabelais's hungry giant *Gargantua*, whose name evokes both Spanish *garganta* 'throat' and Greco-Latin *gigant-* 'giant'. Besides being the root of our own *giant* and *gigantic*, that root is also the source of the modern metric prefix *giga-* 'billion', whose numerical value is dwarfed in turn by *gazillion* and *googol*.

Like *monstrous* and *mammoth* among the M's, the G words for 'big' are all metaphorical food words. *Gobs* of food, *gobs* of stuff, a *glut* of stuff, stuff *galore*: these are essentially one-word equivalents of phrases like "too much on my plate," "a real mouthful," and "big enough to choke a horse." 'Too much' is always unappetizing, so *gustus* 'taste' easily turns to *disgust*, and *grand* easily becomes *grandiose*. 'Unrefined' is *coarse*, *crass*, *crude*, *gross*, *grotesque*, *gauche*. Many sets of abusive words begin with velars. One set is *goddamn* and its euphemisms like *gum-busted*, *goldurn*, *cotton-pickin'*, and *cockamamie*. Another set consists of slurs like *Kraut* and *goombah*, for it is well known that most slurs in English have a velar in them somewhere, even at the end or middle, like *Frog*, *hick*, and *yokel*. The subliminal message of these velars is "You make me gag!" That's why *geek* and *gook* look so much like the comic-strip word for retching: *Gaak!*

Gaping Chasms

I suspect that the very shapes of G and C were originally intended as pictograms of open mouths. The Romans created both letters out of the Greek gamma (now written [Γ, γ], but originally more like <), and they must have realized the mouthiness of the shapes they settled on, for it is certainly apparent to modern eyes. The profile of G reminded Kipling of a fish's greedy mouth (specifically a lake-pike, one of the cruelest of game fish); and that of C reminded Paul Claudel of "the mouth breathing in and swallowing." The Hebrew letter for K, called kaph [כ, ך], looks like a backwards C, as if it were a mouth opening to the left instead of the right; and the Chinese word for mouth, *kou*, is written with a boxy character  that shows an open mouth from the front.³

Yet we need not see C's shape as a mouth. Michel Leiris saw "the concavity of *cavernes*," Fremont saw "a cup on its side," and Margaret Magnus's friend Joan Jolly saw a *container*—appropriately, for almost every container from *cup* to *castle* has a velar name, from *capsules*, *cases*, *cartridges*, *cartons*, *kettles*, *cauldrons*, *kegs* through *cupboards*, *closets*, *cabinets*, *carrels*, *cubicles*, *cubby-holes*, *caskets*, *coffins* right up to 'residences' like *cottages*, *cabins*, *cloisters*, *casas*, and "*cribs*." Prisons are there too, in *cages*, *coops*, *kennels*, *corrals*; in slang like *can*, *clink*, *cooler*; and in foreign words like Spanish *calabozo*, Latin *carcer*, Hebrew *kele*. Velar containers are ubiquitous, and their mouthy origins are hard to miss. In Japanese, *kōro* is an 'incense pot', *kori* is 'hamper', the *kara* in *karate* means 'empty', and 'mouth' itself is *kuchi*, written, like its Chinese root *kou*, as a gaping hole.

If you yawn at a mirror, you will literally see such a gaping hole, for 'yawn' is exactly what *gape* and *gap* originally meant. *Chasm* is likewise from the Greek for 'yawn'. *Gorge* is from French *gorge* 'throat', and *gully* is from English *gullet*. Most 'holes in the earth' begin with mouthy velars: *canyon*, *crevasse*, *glen*, *clough*, *cliff*, *gulf*, *grave*, *grotto*, *cavern*, *cave*. A cave's

³Just as our G mimics C, the Hebrew letters for G and Q mimic the leftward-opening kaph: כ; ך.

opening is its *mouth*, and the openings in our bodies are *orifices*, cousins to *oral*. The ‘vagina’ has a dozen mouthy nicknames: *snatch*, *snapper*, *snizz*, *muff*, *minge*, *muffin*; *gash*, *cunt*, *cunny*, *coochie*, *cooze*, *crumpet*, *clam*, *quim*, *quif*. When the linguist Ivan Fónagy heard about a gay psychoanalytic patient who always mispronounced the French word *vagin* with a hard *g*, he thought the harsh velar probably represented the man’s fear of a *vagina dentata*, mythology’s recurring image of a vagina with teeth.

Before we leave behind the imagery of open mouths, here is an interesting case of parallelism. Why is a *cask* also called a *barrel*? Velar names like *cask* evoke the mouthy concavity of containers’ insides, while B names like *barrel* evoke the convexity of their outsides--the ‘inflatedness’ they seem to share with *blimps* and *balloons*. Different vantage point, different word: *bottle* or *carafe*, *bassinet* or *cradle*, *box* or *crate*, *booth* or *kiosk*, *bunker* or *crypt*. It works across languages too: *basket* and Latin *corbula*, *bucket* and Greek *krōssos*, *box* and Russian *korobka*. The duality is even apparent in the names of our traditional capacity measures: *barrels* and *bushels* contain *cups*, *quarts*, and *gallons*.

Jaws Again

But the chief parallel of the ‘mouth’ velars is still with the nasals M and N that I discussed in *Cenacle* 66⁴, and nowhere more so than in the sorts of ‘biting’ words in that essay’s “Jaws” section. *Snap!* *Crunch!* When a *crocodile* or a wolf *snatches* a *snack* or *grabs* a bit of *grub*, both types of sounds “lovingly retell each step”: the nasals *snatch*, *mangle*, *masticate*, *mash*; the velars *grab*, *cut*, *grind*, *crush*. They go arm-in-arm through every detail: jaws shut *snappy* and *quick*, incisors *snip* and *clip*, and all the *maiming* and *mauling* is rather *grisly* and *gory*. I suppose the human unconscious long ago chose snarly *m*, *n* and throaty *g*, *k* as the fittest sounds to represent mouths and jaws; and for the sake of cognitive efficiency, it still encourages words for any remotely jawlike concept, such as ‘compressing’ or ‘stealing’, to congeal around one of those four sounds. The main semantic branchings of the velar ‘jaw’ words appear below. If you find any of the examples doubtful, check them against the image of a wolf’s bared teeth snapping at a rabbit.

First, the simple mechanics: Jaws *close*, like the shell of a *clam* or the *claws* of a *crab*. The front teeth act as *clippers*, *cutters*, *croppers*, *cleavers*; and the canine teeth *curve* into *crooks* like a cow’s horn (Latin *cornu*) or a cat’s *claw*, the better to snag things with.⁵ When the teeth are *clenched* together, the pressure forces the jaws’ contents together like a *clamp* or *clip*. The action is called *squeezing*, and its effect is to *crush*, *crumple*, *squish*, *squash*. (Rebellions are *quashed* and *squelched*.) The space inside closed jaws is *cramped*, *close*, *claustrophobic*, German *klein* ‘small’. (A small person is *squat*, a little *squirt*.)

Now, the chief metaphor: When jaws *close* on something they *clutch*. This image gives us most of our words for ‘take something in the hand’. Some are concrete, like *grip*, *grab*, *grasp*, *grope*, *grok*, *clasp*, *cling*. Others are more figurative, like *get* and its causal *give*; as well as *gain*, *garner*, *gather*, *cadge*, *catch*, *capture*, *collect*, *covet*, *claim*, *keep*. ‘Steal’ is *clout* in thieves’ slang,

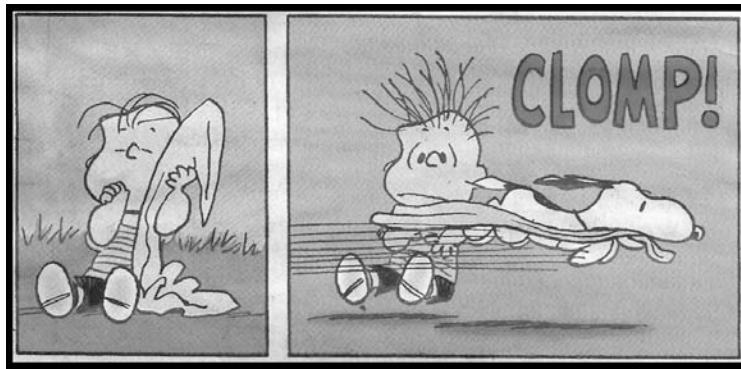
⁴ “M & N: Mouth and Nose.”

⁵ A complete curve is a *c-r circle*, and ‘turn’ is *g-r gyrate*. German for ‘curved, crooked’ and ‘circle’ are *Krum*, *Kreis*. In Indonesian a similar pair would be *kilo* ‘curve’ and *gelling* ‘bracelet, ring’.

krast’ in Russian, and *kleptein* in Greek (whence *klepto* ‘thief’). Who “stole Christmas”? The *Grinch*! And what was *Scrooge* like? “Oh, but he was a *tight-fisted* hand at the grindstone, *Scrooge*! a *squeezing*, *wrenching*, *grasping*, *scraping*, *clutching*, *covetous*, old sinner!” And *Gabriel Grub*? He “smiled *grimly*, and *clutched* the handle of his spade with a firmer *grasp*.” See how the velars work, each one suggesting others?

Clang!

Next, onomatopoeia: The wolf’s teeth either *click* shut softly or *crash* down hard. This is the image behind all our velar words for ‘noisy impact’ (like nasal *smash*, etc.). When Snoopy suddenly snatches Linus’s blanket in his mouth, the noise is “*Clomp!*” Abrupt high-frequency impact usually has *p*, *t*, *k* after the vowel: *clap*, *clatter*, *crack*, *crackle*, *clip-clop*, *clickety-clack*. To ‘hit’ is *clout*, *clip*, *clobber*. An *n* signals resonance or lower frequency: *clink*, *clank*, *clunk*, *clang*. Dutch and German respectively use the words *klank* and *Klang* for ‘sound’ itself, and *clangor* is Latin for ‘noise’.



Where noise is, there are bells. Velars ring throughout Poe’s famous poem “The Bells”: “a *crystalline* delight”; “*Golden* bells!”; “a *gush* of euphony”; “a *clamorous* appealing”; “they *clang*, and *clash*, and *roar*!”; “the *clamor* and the *clangor* of the bells”; “a *glory* in so rolling”; “the *groaning* of the bells.” Bells are struck with *clappers*; and ‘bell’ itself is *cloche* in French, *Glocke* in German, *kolokol* in Russian, *garas* in Egyptian Arabic. Indonesian for a ‘small bell’ is *keleneng*, a word that also stands for a bell’s sound, like *clang* in English, or *glas* in French. That last word, pronounced “glah,” is famous for being one of the few examples that Saussure singled out for ridicule in his passage stating that words’ meanings have no connection to their component sounds. But when we see it fitted into context beside dozens of similar words, *glas* rather rebukes Saussure than supports him—and the rebuke is gleefully continued in Derrida’s book *Glas*, which pointedly tracked masses of *gl* words into a handful of recurring themes.

Cruella

Finally, metonymy: The last ‘jaw’ theme is Death. The rabbit *croaks* ‘dies’ when the wolf *kills* him: the jaws are the *Grim Reaper*. Old *Cronos* of Greek legend devoured his own children, and the first villain in English literature was the man-eating *Grendel* in *Beowulf*. To this day, I’d guess that at least a third of our fictional villains have velar names. In movies,

think of *Cruella De Vil*, *Freddy Krueger*, and old *Noah Cross* in Chinatown; in books, *Claggart* and *Squeak* in *Billy Budd*, *Kurtz* in *Heart of Darkness*, *Clare Quilty* in *Lolita*, and Stephen King's *Carrie* and *Christine*. My one-third proportion is just right for the 60 Sherlock Holmes stories, 19 of which have chief troublemakers with velar names, including *Isadora Klein*, *John Clay*, *Capt. Crocker*, *Mrs. Gibson*, bloody *Gorgiano*, *Dr. Grimesby Roylott*, and *Baron Adelbert Gruner*—all *crooks* and *creeps*.

The Holmes stories also use velars in incidental language to create an atmosphere of horror. *Baron Gruner* in "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client" is an "aristocrat of *crime*" with "all the *cruelty* of the *grave*." "Nature's danger-signal" is *Gruner's* mouth: "If ever I saw a *murderer's* mouth it was there—a *cruel*, hard *gash* in the face." See how *mouth* and *murderer* are placed next to the velar *cruel* and *gash*? Writers constantly look for opportunities to combine the slobbering "danger-signal" of M with that of C or G, often pairing these sounds with *r*. The collusion is especially important in names. One Holmes villain I did not count above was named *Morecroft* (*m-r/cr*). The Baskervilles live near deadly *Grimpen Mire*, and the terrible *Grimesby Roylott* lives at *Stoke Moran*, a house with "gray gables" and "two *curving* wings, like the *claws* of a *crab*." Even Holmes's friends in the police take on the local coloring: the stories' recurring police inspectors, besides *Lestrade*, are *Gregson*, *Morton*, and *Martin*.

Such names still mean 'cops and robbers' a century later. The kindly ex-cop father on *Frasier* is *Martin Crane*, while *Martin Clay* and *Morton Cropper* are villains in novels by Michael Frayn and A. S. Byatt.⁶ Velars and nasals need each other: Old *Scratch* and Old *Nick*, the *Capulets* and the *Montagues*, *Scrooge* and *Marley*. In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, it was *Marlow* who found the villainous *Kurtz* (first glimpsing him on a stretcher "opening his mouth voraciously"). Harry Potter's enemy *Malfoy* has sidekicks *Crabbe* and *Goyle*, Jack Schaefer's *Goss* and *Malley* are Western land-grabbers, and the villains of Winston Churchill's 1890s novel *Savrola* were called *Kreutze* and *Molara*. (There's a toothy name for you!) Among crime-fighters, Cornwell's *Kay Scarpetta* has a sidekick named *Marino*, and of course *Scully* has her *Mulder*. Scotch and Irish cops pack both kinds of letters into a one suitcase. Bruce Willis's *McClane* in *Die Hard* is a one-man M-G/C cop, just like *MacGyver*, *McCloud*, and *McGarrett* in the old TV shows.

G-Men Live!

What really surprises me, however, is the way these velar predispositions creep into real life. Our best-known mystery writers are *John Grisham*, *Agatha Christie*, *Patricia Cornwell*, *Martha Grimes*, *Sue Grafton*, and *Caroline Graham*; and then there's the horror director *Wes Craven*, the horror expert *David Skal*, slasher film expert *Carol J. Clover*, and the bloody-minded Brothers *Grimm*. Criminals have these fishy names too. A school shooting in Mississippi a few years ago was linked to a "cult-like group" called the *Kroth*. That caught my eye, but so did the name of the group's leader: *Grant Boyette*. One of Holmes's 19 velar villains was a secret society called the *Scowrers*, actually named for a real-life London gang like the *Crips* in American cities today. When I began writing this essay, *Michael Skakel* was

⁶ *Headlong: A Novel* (1999) by Michael Frayn; *Possession: A Romance* (1990) by A. S. Byatt.

newly imprisoned for one celebrated murder in Connecticut, and a *Grzeszczyk* was on trial for another. The murderous *Kray* twins were celebrities in 1960s London, and “Sammy the Bull” *Gravano* became famous as a mob informer in 1990s Brooklyn, a city where the letter *G* is used as a friendly and admiring nickname for a *gangsta*.

London and Brooklyn. When I mentioned how the Holmes stories used velar words to create an atmosphere of horror, I was thinking in particular of one story that began when “a *gruesome* packet” was delivered to a “Miss *Cushing*, of *Cross* Street, *Croydon*.” Long after Holmes’s day, a London real policeman was murdered in that same neighborhood when a “*Cristopher Craig* . . . was trying to rob a warehouse in *Croyden*.” That’s from the *New York Times*⁷ and so is this: A Brooklyn police detective trailing a gangster called Nicholas Grancio slowly “developed a remarkable mole within the Mafia, a grim *Columbo* family killer named *Gregory Scarpa*. . . . It was Mr. Scarpa’s hit team that pulled alongside Mr. *Grancio*’s car on Jan. 7, 1992, and dispatched him with a shotgun blast”.⁸

What on earth is going on here? I think William Faulkner tells us in his *Light in August*. When a character in that book encounters a proud-looking stranger called Joe *Christmas*, he suddenly realizes “how a man’s name, which is supposed to be just the sound for who he is, can be somehow an augur of what he will do, if other men can only read the meaning in time. . . . it was as though there was something in the sound of [Christmas’s name] that was trying to tell them what to expect; that he carried with him his own inescapable warning, like a flower its scent or a rattlesnake its rattle.” Christmas is a killer, of course, and he’s finally shot to death by one Percy *Grimm*.

Did you hear the rattle that time?



Picture by Victor Vanek

⁷ *New York Times*, Mar. 18, 2007.

⁸ *New York Times*, Jan. 6, 2006.

G.C. Dillon



The Wicked Witch

The dead wooden eyes of the mahogany mallard seemed to track her as it floated slowly down the meandering river. Dorothea shook her head. The water was calm and gentle here, but just beyond this small, sweet oxbow of the waterway, sharp rocks formed violent rapids. *Some poor huntsman just lost his favorite duck decoy*, she thought.

"Isn't duck a gamy bird?" asked the old knight, as his steel garb squeaked up to her. His huge battleaxe clanked against his back. The aged paladin wore an all-encompassing suit of armor. Small reddish-brown spots of rust marred many of its creaky joints. "I suppose," she replied.

"Grrr Arrraghh," came the roar from the lion-man upon the forgotten path they trekked through the woods. Its mangled mane hung in dreadlocks. It bounded upon four legs until it came to her, then it stood, shakily, upon just two. It opened a fanged mouth to speak. "I sniffed out the trail."

If she could have mastered the four winds, she would have whisked herself home. She was just a simple magic user, the castle's potion concocter, student alchemist at times, and midwife when required. (She knew the herbs that stilled the mother's pain of childbirth without injuring the one to be born.) Prince Brodigan had offered his knights and wizards for their task, but Sir Caspian said he had his own fellowship. Some group—four strangers lost in this enchanted forest. A dark, cold and unpleasant place. Or no longer lost as the lion-man had sussed the way.

"Then we should go," said the fourth member of their fellowship, a clerk of the chancery. His slight frame was stuffed into a blue suit with golden buttons, cuff links and even golden epaulets. A dark Inverness cloak hung down his back.

Dorothea slipped her maroon hood over her blonde hair, and wrapped her cape about her shoulders. *We left no breadcrumbs*, she thought as they moved.

Four heavily muscled gorillas led them into the witch's chamber. The beasts' wide leathery wings flapped reflexively as they pushed the company to their knees. They had been captured outside the witch's tower. The witch stood before them. *A handsome woman*, Dorothea thought, *but something seemed just left of center about her*. The woman wore a flowing black dress. The loose clothing failed to hide the womanly curves beneath.

"I have followed your journey through my eyes of the forest." The witch rubbed a wooden statue of a ruddy falcon. Dorothea recalled other statues they had seen in the forest: not just the duck, but the 'make believe' squirrel, complete with acorn, that the lion-man had pointed out to her.

The clerk stood up. "We require a love potion."

"I have nine. What do you offer in recompense?" the witch asked. Her skin was pale, so pale, so nonhuman; it had an olive complexion.

"Forty pieces of Elven silver," replied the clerk. "Rare in this hinterland."

"I've seen silver before. And greater treasures!" the witch snarled. "But that may do, nonetheless." She took a vial from a pocket within her long gown.

Dorothea took the flask and threw its contents upon the witch. "You will love Sir Caspian and wish him no harm!" she commanded with all of her magical power, force and will. The witch cackled back at her.

"But I do love him, my sweets, and I do wish him harm. I have loved since we went upon our own quest in a desert land far away to defeat the Old Wizard Under the Mountain. We fell in love as we trekked and fought our way through. He swore his heart was mine. *Forever*. And today he takes that trollop for a trophy *bride*?"

Dorothea felt her lips shift into a frown. Not only had the charm failed, but she tried to imagine her liege-lord with this creature before her. What times or perils had thrown them together? What monsters and trials had allowed love to bloom? Though it seemed not to have flowered...

"Clarissa is a princess," replied the clerk. He spoke the truth; the girl was Brodigan's daughter, and the King's niece.

"A genetic misconception. Her father's lust for a serving wench, no doubt."

"She is a princess!" replied the clerk. The witch raised her clawed talons. Dorothea stepped forward.

"I'll get you, my pretty, and your little dogs too." Dorothea felt the **cone of force** form, the magical call to the four daughters of *Aeolus, Father of the Winds*.

"*Aire! Slán agat orm*," Dorothea whispered, infusing her fear and hope with the ancient words. Her quickly spun counter-spell shunted the effects away from her. Barely. Her companions had been blown across the room, and into the back, brick wall. How could she combat such magic and power?

"I confess to you our plan failed." Dorothea paused, glancing at the clerk (*his* plan). "Failed miserably. We hoped to use your own powers to make you love our lord, and wish him well. I see you don't. And that you do. We believed your magics would work, would suffice. For love should not be about harm. Or jealousy. Or hate. Can you say true love cannot do what your charms can do?"

"Yes, my lovely, I can; however I *may* not. Tell me, my dear, have you loved?"

"Yes."

"Not one of these?" the witch asked disdainfully.

"No. A squire, nearly a knight. He is on the Crusade."

"Oh, *the* Crusade. Most impressive. What if some Saracen seraglio girl or Jewess finds his eye? Is more comely? Has his true love?"

"Then, " Dorothea started, closing her eyes, forcing away briny tears, "his love for me was not true. I will..." She gasped for a breath. "Will wish him well. Happiness at least."

"Your words fail to convince; however I can see the conviction behind the syllables.

"Give dear Caspian this for a wedding present." The witch handed her a wooden duck, much like—if not the same—as the decoy she saw on the trail. "Have him keep it in his hunting den, not the master bedroom.

"Now: Go!"



W.S. Merwin



Burning the Cat

In the spring, by the big shuck-pile
 Between the bramble-choked brook where the copperheads
 Curled in the first sun, and the mud road,
 All at once it could no longer be ignored.
 The season steamed with an odor for which
 There has never been a name, but it shouted above all.
 When I went near, the wood-lice were in its eyes
 And a nest of beetles in the white fur of its armpit.
 I built a fire there by the shuck-pile
 But it did no more than pop the beetles
 And singe the damp fur, raising a stench
 Of burning hair that bit through the sweet-day smell.
 Then thinking how time leeches after indecency,
 Since both grief is indecent and the lack of it,
 I went away and fetched newspaper,
 And wrapped it in dead events, days and days,
 Soaked it in kerosene and put it in
 With the garbage on a heaped nest of sticks:
 It was harder to burn than the peels of oranges,
 Bubbling and spitting, and the reek was like
 Rank cooking that drifted with the smoke out
 Through the budding woods and clouded the shining dogwood.
 But I became stubborn: I would consume it
 Though the pyre should take me a day to build
 And the flames rise over the house. And hours I fed
 That burning, till I was black and streaked with sweat;
 And poked it out then, with charred meat still clustering
 Thick around the bones. And buried it so
 As I should have done in the first place, for
 The earth is slow, but deep, and good for hiding;
 I would have used it if I had understood
 How nine lives can vanish in one flash of a dog's jaws,
 A car, or a copperhead, and yet how one small
 Death, however reckoned, is hard to dispose of.

The Drunk in the Furnace

For a good decade
 The furnace stood in the naked gully, fireless
 And vacant as any hat. Then when it was
 No more to them than a hulking black fossil
 To erode unnoticed with the rest of the junk-hill
 By the poisonous creek, and rapidly to be added
 To their ignorance,

They were afterwards astonished
 To confirm, one more, a twist of smoke like a pale
 Resurrection, staggering out of its chewed hole,
 And to remark then other tokens that someone,
 Cosily bolted behind the eyeholed iron
 Door of the drafty burner, had there established
 His bad castle.

Where he gets his spirits
 It's a mystery. But the stuff keeps him musical:
 Hammer-and-anviling with poker and bottle
 To his juggled bellowings, till the last groaning clang
 As he collapses onto the rioting
 Springs of a litter of car seats ranged on the grates,
 To sleep like an iron pig.

In their tar-paper church
 On a text about stoke holes that are sated never
 Their Reverend lingers. They nod and hate trespassers.
 When the furnace wakes, though all afternoon
 Their witless offspring flock like piped rats to its siren
 Crescendo, and agape on the crumbling ridge
 Stand in a row and learn.

Air

Naturally it is night.
 Under the overturned lute with its
 One string I am going my way
 Which has a strange sound.

This way the dust, that way the dust.
 I listen to both sides
 But I keep right on.
 I remember the leaves sitting in judgment
 And then winter.

I remember the rain with its bundle of roads.
 The rain taking all its roads.
 Nowhere.

Young as I am, old as I am,

I forget tomorrow, the blind man.
 I forget the life among the buried windows.
 The eyes in the curtains.
 The wall
 Growing through the immortelles.
 I forget silence
 The owner of the smile.

This must be what I wanted to be doing,
 Walking at night between the two deserts,
 Singing.

The Last One

Well they'd made up their minds to be everywhere because why not.
 Everywhere was theirs because they thought so.
 They with two leaves they whom the birds despise.
 In the middle of stones they made up their minds.
 They started to cut.

Well they cut everything because why not.
 Everything was theirs because they thought so.
 It fell into its shadows and they took both away.
 Some to have some for burning.

Well cutting everything they came to the water.
 They came to the end of the day there was one left standing.
 They would cut it tomorrow they went away.
 The night gathered in the last branches.
 The shadow of the night gathered in the shadow on the water.
 The night and the shadow put on the same head.
 And it said Now.

Well in the morning they cut the last one.
 Like the others the last one fell into its shadow.
 It fell into its shadow on the water.
 They took it away its shadow stayed on the water.

Well they shrugged they started trying to get the shadow away.
 They cut right to the ground the shadow stayed whole.
 They laid boards on it the shadow came out on top.

They shone lights on it the shadow got blacker and clearer.
 They exploded the water the shadow rocked.
 They built a huge fire on the roots.
 They sent up black smoke between the shadow and the sun.
 The new shadow flowed without changing the old one.
 They shrugged they went away to get stones.

They came back the shadow was growing.
 They started setting up stones it was growing.
 They looked the other way it went on growing.
 They decided they would make a stone out of it.
 They took stones to the water they poured them into the shadow.
 They poured them in they poured them in the stones vanished.
 The shadow was not filled it went on growing.
 That was one day.
 The next day was just the same it went on growing.
 They did all the same things it was just the same.

They decided to take its water from under it.
 They took away water they took it away the water went down.
 The shadow stayed where it was before.
 It went on growing it grew onto the land.
 They started to scrape the shadow with machines.
 When it touched the machines it stayed on them.
 They started to beat the shadow with sticks.
 Where it touched the sticks it stayed on them.
 They started to beat the shadow with hands.
 Where it touched the hands it stayed on them.
 That was another day.

Well the next day started about the same it went on growing.
 They pushed lights into the shadow.
 Where the shadow got onto them they went out.
 They began to stomp on the edge it got their feet.
 And when it got their feet they fell down.
 It got into eyes the eyes went blind.

The ones that fell down it grew over and they vanished.
 The ones that went blind and walked into vanished.
 The ones that could see and stood still
 It swallowed their shadows.
 Then it swallowed them too and they vanished.
 Well the others ran.

The ones that were left went away to live if it would let them.
 They went as far as they could.
 The lucky ones with their shadows.

Wish

The star in my
Hand is falling

All the uniforms know what's no use

May I bow to Necessity not
To her hirelings

December Night

The cold slope is standing in darkness
But the south of the trees is dry to the touch

The heavy limbs climb into the moonlight bearing feathers
I came to watch these
White plants older at night
The oldest
Come first to the ruins

And I hear magpies kept awake by the moon
The water flows through its
Own fingers without end

Tonight once more
I find a single prayer and it is not for me

Exercise

First forget what time it is
for an hour
do it regularly every day

then forget what day of the week it is
do this regularly for a week
then forget what country you are in
and practice doing it in company
for a week
then do them together
for a week
with as few breaks as possible

follow these by forgetting to add
or to subtract
it makes no difference
you can change them around
after a week
both will help you later
to forget how to count

forget how to count
starting with your own age
starting with how to count backward
starting with even numbers
starting with Roman numerals
starting with fractions of Roman numerals
starting with the old calendar
going on to the old alphabet
going on to the alphabet
until everything is continuous again

go on to forgetting elements
starting with water
proceeding to earth
rising in fire

forget fire

Yesterday

My friend says I was not a good son
you understand
I say yes I understand

he says I did not go
to see my parents very often you know
and I say yes I know

even when I was living in the same city he says
maybe I would go there once
a month or maybe even less
I say oh yes

he says the last time I went to see my father
I say the last time I went to see my father

he says the last time I saw my father
he was asking me about my life
how I was making out and he
went into the next room
to get something to give me

oh I say
feeling again the cold
of my father's hand the last time

he says and my father turned
in the doorway and saw me
look at my wristwatch and he
said you know I would like you to stay
and talk with me

oh yes I say

but if you are busy he said
I don't want you to feel that you
have to
just because I'm here

I say nothing

he says my father
 said maybe
 you have important work you are doing
 or maybe you should be seeing
 somebody I don't want to keep you

I look out the window
 my friend is older than I am
 he says and I told my father it was so
 and I got up and left him then
 you know

though there was nowhere I had to go
 and nothing I had to do

Native Trees

Neither my father nor my mother knew
 the names of the trees
 where I was born
 what is that
 I asked and my
 father and mother did not
 hear they did not look where I pointed
 surfaces of furniture held
 the attention of their fingers
 and across the room they could watch
 walls they had forgotten
 where there were no questions
 no voices and no shade

Were there trees
where they were children
where I had not been
I asked
were there trees in those places
where my father and my mother were born
and in that time did
my father and my mother see them
and when they said yes it meant
they did not remember
What were they I asked what were they
but both my father and my mother
said they never knew

The Name of the Air

It could be like that then the beloved
old dog finding it harder and harder
to breathe and understanding but coming
to ask whether there is something that can
be done about it coming again to
ask and then standing there without asking

The Odds

His first winter in that city
after years in the north a friend
wrote to me of how people there
were dealing with the cold
he told me that crews
were digging up the avenue
down at the corner all day
the men keeping a fire going
in an old oil drum with holes
down the sides and feeding it whatever
turned up and he had been watching
two men by the barrel with three
gloves between them passing one
glove back and forth
while they stamped their feet
and he had tried to tell whether
it was a right or a left glove

Rain Light

All day the stars watch from long ago
my mother said I am going now
when you are alone you will be all right
whether or not you know you will know
look at the old house in the dawn rain
all the flowers are forms of water
the sun reminds them through a white cloud
touches the patchwork spread on the hill
the washed colors of the afterlife
that lived there long before you were born
see how they wake without a question
even though the whole world is burning



Photograph by Victor Vanek

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Why ? [a new fixtion]

(continued)

cix.

Dylan stands, slowly. "I have to go to the bathroom," he says softly. "It's upstairs."

Maya nods. Smiles or something like it. Dylan closes the door behind him.

She moves to the floor, slinks around to stretch out. The night grows thick about her. The TV noises fade somehow, maybe she's under the bed now.

Feels Dylan leave, again & again, she'd watched him with unturned head but not it keeps turning & he keeps going & she wonders what he meant by what he said.

She could panic but it never does much good. She learned that.

"OK," she whispers. "Now." Closes her eyes & lets the shroom space envelope her from within—

Will you talk to me?

We're always talking to you.

Will Dylan be OK?

[silence]

OK. Dumb question. What are we supposed to do?

What we?

Dylan & me. And John, if he comes here.

What were you before you met Dylan?

I was lost. I was happy & lost.

Now?

I'm just happy.

But?

It doesn't last. It never did.

And that's how it is?

No.

No?

Tell me something I can use or think about!

There are traps & doors. They resemble each other.

What else?

Nothing is really ever gone & nothing comes back.

Does Dylan like me?

[silence]

She twists again under the bed & then stays still as the world around her undoes again & again

Dylan is sitting with his friend on the stairs landing between the first & second floor.

Going to work is a good idea.

What if I don't want to?

You can't stay here.

A brown floppy-eared bunny slackly leaned against the wall. They'd met the night before.

What do I do with Maya?

What do you want to?

I don't know. I don't know about girls.

Nobody does.

It gets scarier. Earth hangs above her & she is floating perilous, all seems near to falling & she forces it back with her breath, sometimes breathing faster works, sometimes slower, finally she gently climbs away onto a blue desert floor where there is low shrieking & no daylight—

traps & doors resemble each

other, I can't know how

to do this, breathing slowly

to keep crawling, shrieking

is the world's collective

pain how do I get back to

Dylan? how? I have forgotten

so much how do I remember

him?

Dylan leaves his friend & climbs the stairs to the rooming house's second floor. Long dark hallway to kitchen, doors on either side, closed, locked, other boarders he guesses, new to this place, notices behind him an office, all sorts of dusty furniture, dusty pictures on the wall, turns back to the hallway & walks slowly a mirror between two of the doorways catches him & he looks

jumps back there's Maya looking back at him, smiling, just her face, shrooms' trick, he bets, she's so pretty, then she's Cordelia & tears mass in his eyes before he can flinch—

"I'm sorry"

"It's OK"

"She reminds me of you. But that's not fair."

"Nothing's fair, Dylan. The world is balanced but not fair."

He listens. "Are you OK?"

"I'm alright. I miss our days. But we had to grow up, right?"

"I suppose. I don't really feel it."

She laughs & his tears swallow him.

A door opens & a scruffy-bearded balding man in grey t-shirt & boxers looks out.

"You live here?"

"Downstairs."

"Lost?"

"No. I need the bathroom."

"It's down there. Off the kitchen. No shower but the bath water is hot."

"Thanks."

The man grimaces & shuts his door. Cordelia's not in the mirror. Just his scruffy young face with enlarged pupils. He looks deeper, sees sadness. Nth that he should—he's had it fine next to some. Still, it's there.

The bathroom's wallpaper is brown & its images smudged, shelves everywhere lined with coffee mugs & tourist trinkets. Walt Disney. Joe the Camel. The tub is an unloved off-white. The sink & toilet are clean through littered with new & ancient razors, toothbrushes, bars of soap, shaving cream & the like. He avoids the mirror & pisses long, long, feels like his body is renewing itself. Ah. Smile. Yes. "Piss for the Ages!" he remembers his old bridge friends would cry on their long-drinking nights. Exactly.

Passes from bathroom through kitchen to hallway again & just as he feels he'll handle this better he notices he's walking but making no progress. The other end of the hallway keeps stretching out further. He hears televisions behind the closed doors. Radios. Snoring. Soft talking maybe like prayer.

Shroom tricks. But they usually make some point with them. What this time?

He forgets which door he wants & a little panic surges in him.

cx.

John is lost. How did it happen? He thinks he took the wrong bus. Now where? Doesn't know. Doesn't care. Not for the moment.

This bench is good. Good enough. He tries to reassemble. Keeps dissipating. He laughs & then forgets to.

What then?

I don't know.

Will it be OK? When wasn't it? Am I safe? Are you?

He remembers before Marie. Before booze. Before any of this.

The woods. He'd spent a lot of time in the woods. His uncle had a cabin, nice place, built it himself. Sturdy. Good even in the winter.

Where was his uncle now? Not so far. Told him he'd inherit the cabin one day. Showed him how to use an axe, build a fire.

He read more after he quit college & hitchhiked out here. So much for yearly visits; he was committing to the West now.

Shakes his head. OK. 2005. Portland? Right. Guy sits on the bench & pulls a crumpled bag from his dirty coat. Hit of brown gunk. Swallows hard & with difficulty. "Wanna blast, brother?"

"No, thanks. I quit."

"Ahh. Yah, me too. Then the bitch left me & the henfucker laid me off. I needed a friend. You see."

"Yah. Been there."

"You OK? You look like me on a bad day. No offense!"

"Taking a breath."

Man nods, pushes back his black knit cap from viney white hair. "Yah. Good idea." Drinks again. "'World'll chop off your business & try to sell it back to you for double." John nods.

His companion is thickly dressed, John sees several layers of shirts & sweaters within his long coat. Old pants, faded khaki green. Simple black & white shoes. Clean. Worn but clean.

"I'm John."

"Rudy." His handshake is strong & steady.

"Nice night."

"You'll find them."

"Who?"

"I got you pegged for a father chasing his kid. Drugs, a boy, a girl maybe. I'm pretty good at it."

"It?"

"Guessing a man's business. I used to be better. Took me pretty far. Big house, nice car, sexy woman in my bed. Funny how they all come & go together." Laughs hoarsely.

"What happened?"

Fixes John with one bloodshot & one utterly clear blue-green eye. False, John knows in an instant. "I got to know too much. I couldn't stop it. It was hints for a long time & I used 'em. Then it got easy, & then it got to be too easy, & then I couldn't stop it."

John nods.

"I'd drink to dull it. Then it started falling apart. How do you steer a boat on God's own sea?"

John shrugs.

"I lost it. No, wait" he thinks. "I lost everything else."

"What do you do now?"

"I wait."

"For?"

The man smiles with well-kept yellowing teeth. "Not a father. But some sort of close love. Get along to them. There's some time."

John stands, dazed. "I don't know where—"

"That bus down the street coming. I saw you get off. Get back on & keep going."

John nods. "Thanks."

The man nods, raises his bagged beverage. "Better not to know next. Anyone who does will tell you the same."

John gets on the bus & continues along.

Rudy nods & pulls his jacket tighter.

Breathes slower after a few, calms, OK, a bus, mac, not brain surgery, near empty, you've got the address, ask the driver, politely, gather the words, here goes—

"We near Northeast Prescott Street?"

"Next stop."

"Thanks"

"No problem"

"How's your night going?"

"Peaceful. No arrests." Laughs.

"That's good. This a rough area?"

"It's OK in the daytime. The negroes & PRs come out at night, walk around til they find trouble"

"I see."

"I aint no racist but some people got no self-respect. The best ones find Christ & get cleaned up. I see them & can tell right off."

"I'm sure"

"The good book tells us all men are brothers. Some just don't know it yet so they don't act right."

"That's true."

"Here's your stop. Be safe."

"Thanks."

"Watch out for doors & traps!"

John twitches around but the bus is on its way.

OK, here it is. Walk a block or two & check on them.

What if they're . . . busy?

He knew Dylan was a novice but Maya looked—never mind that! He'd risk it to calm his worry. This night had to get back on his side somehow.

He walks through cool, comforting air, tries to focus on finding the house number, block after block, thoughts of Maya blur to memories of Marie, that apartment she lived in early on, her mother, her sister & kid, hardly a quiet or private moment til one weekend he came over to candles & serenity, to dancing to Marie's favorite slow electronic music, hands on her hips, moving in one sway, thinking love & desire played games with each other & we their pawns, did he love Marie that early on or really, simply want to fuck her? He was patient, he'd been told less is more & decided to believe finally after too many frenzied gropings for too little delight, just sway with her, it felt good, he released to it, what due will arrive—

John nearly on his knees, stopped, moaning, goddamn fucking mushrooms, gimme something to look forward to! Come on, some sliver of light! *Come on!*

He walks & the numbers close in on the one he wants. He's OK again, led the badness out for its run, all good, all something. Buttoned up. Functional.

There it is. 733 NE Prescott. Another grey old house on this street full of them. But this one contained his friends. This one would welcome him in. Maybe he could stay a little while. Dylan would understand.

—She needed to be taken, this was true, felt deeply, laid back, three fingers on her cheek, slide, lips parted, show your tongue, good, now smile, just a little, shhh, this is how it is, what's done, that's good, release to it, to yourself my fingers there & there, good, soft, soft, now smile, yes, you understand, shhh, move with me, it feels better that way, no talking, breathe, breathe, good, now there & there, that's it, you understand, what need there is, snap, & snap, shhh, slowly, there, that's good, show me, go on, show me, very pretty, I like

that, arch, hey! easy now easy there we go there it is now you may go on go on! You wish to please, go on, that's nice, very gently, ahh, very nice, now a little more, go on, *go on*, good, yes there's nothing else, all is safe & private smile safe & private smile safe & private, ohh, good, you see, more very nice, & now you again, now! now! that's better easy easy ahh soft soft so soft & wet yes wet I see wet & tight very ahh moan quietly that's good good now wider lips & lips wider now please me say it please me say it wider shhh safe & private here we are & smooth there feel that very smooth no fear no loss close close how we are raise up a little, good, yes now you feel it, oh very nice, now you feel it, good! moan! good! more! more! nothing is lost! nothing is lost! more! more! nothing departs & nothing comes back! come for me you fucking whore bitch slut CUM FOR ME NOW! AGAIN! HARD! HARDER NOW! now beg me me again for more

—& he pushes open the front door to a darkened vestibule & knocks at an inner door beyond it. Hears movement inside & waits. Maya opens the door to him, looking pretty white & shaky—

cxi.

World boils in blood, I say again, & the old man nods. I clink my electric juice to his black coffee, gaze on yon TV red & glowing, its newsmen fanged & yowling, nod,

“Hey how bout some hockey, barkeep? The Bruins are back!”

“Hell with that, put on the Sox!”

“And the Pats are some schmuck club?”

“Hey! We get em all! We need ten TVs in here, make it a sports bar like all the rest!”

“And some of them Daisy Duke girlies serving our drinks proper for a man's viewing pleasure!”

Everyone laughs. Luna T's Cafe has one TV & that too much at times—

I look at Knickerbocker, his old raw face—

“What are you?”

He shrugs. **“Fixtion.”**

“*What are you?*”

“I've spent my years asking that.”

“And?”

“Maybe I'm just pages in a book, maybe that's all this is. Maybe not. Humans make & make & make.”

“Why?”

“Fear. Hope. Want. Joy. Query another these suckling matters.”

“Do they seem such to you?”

He pauses. Stares me blackly for a pass. Then, I swear it, he laughs. Old explosive sloppy laugh, falling to the bartop, wet, messy laugh—

& in a beat the whole bar follows, blows apart in laughter—

Maybe other ways is it any way possible? Mutual arrival of want toward single climax, sate in hard, clear chords, is it possible?

We consider the King, again, as he folds back thinly & no novel depths await, what his hand once bid & the many went, went fast, & so, & so,

He does not retreat but he counts his munitions, press his remaining warriors for an extra fist to chest, he looks on the sky & no, nothing good, no, nothing good—please—

Why does no brave light step up now? A bloom, an open hand, a face childly with waking spirit?

What doubt leans all back? Which memories, how far back the blood?

Will we be led by number-counting little men hereon? Will the gestures be small &—what?

What possible, ask, what possible, ask it & to & past number-counting little men—*ask*—they can't stop you—

“There is no true lord or king. There is but creation & chaos,” Dr. Knickerbocker says softly.

“No lord?”

“None we may know & flutter upon his hand, trusting he will cup us kindly.”

“What then?”

“Force which thrusts us upon this world & later scratches us from it.”

“Force?”

A drinker interrupts. “No God, preacher? All these years you been sucking your juice & raving at the ceiling, now you say you're done with all that?”

Knickerbocker does not reply.

“You talk to that hippy freak, not to us?”

“What's that?” another asks. Mean drunks.

Knickerbocker is still silent.

“Leave him be, boys,” Mr. Bob says in a voice that implies a hand to collar & a drunk tossed to the curb.

The drinkers don't reply. The moment stretches into silence, then passes.

What just happened? Why is this book so run with violence?

World boils in blood the answer, what's left when the pretty books have been pushed aside for their unusable lies, boils in blood & put on the TV screen & slathered across the newspapers & barked of with glee by man-bastard-suits & woman-bitch-suits, boils in blood & charge you a dollar for your popcorn & soft seat to watch & roar for another—roar for another!

World boils in blood, in the gentlest puff too, call it desire, call it flesh's fury upon all, why here? why this? Why now? What else? Please. More. Don't. Then. Cry. Remember. Bludgeon by stroke. Pen as crushing as blade, all whelming swoops, none final, none the all & so we still.

World boils in blood, kin to water & fire, blow near, blow more, blow til one, blow by—

Raise til a welt of notes then slack til mute—

No answers, not a one, not less, not least, slice half a preacher & nothing holier about the guts—slice a guru—none wiser about the meat—

Is it? Can it? Will it? Promise—or don't—World boils in blood & *you another countless bubble*

World a bubbling reek of war &, worse, of peace, the stillness of staring faces on streets, in carriages, the dire dreams left to powder & blow from one's mind—

the endless bubbling reek of waiting & tomorrow & patience, hours gone unnamed, why & what bother?

“No good from a fist shaking at the unknown. Behold mine,” Dr. Knickerbocker quietly displays his gnarled appendages—I nod & do not agree. **“You won't stop anymore than I will.”**

“I stop when you do.”

“I don't. My pen is my fist, my feather, my blossom, my blade. It's my breath & my beat.” He nods. **“Thus you live, thus you fade.”**

cxii.

Dylan stops & feels the world stop with him. Moves & likewise. Not like it usually is. He tries to think. Ask the mushrooms.

All moves with all.

Also: something about traps & doors.

OK.

Reality is still here just not so sure about it, it doesn't seem to work right. Is Maya still downstairs? I hope so.

Maybe get partway. Get to the bunny, get that far, OK.

Doors & traps. OK.

Dylan closes his eyes & move forward slowly. Concentrates on his feet, feels his inner eyes drop down there to his boots, old, found in a heap, walk now, step, step, see if it works better, but not yet. Step, step. Step. Step.

Eyes open, whoosh in his head to take it all in. He moved! There's the door, on the right. That's the one. Close eyes, a few more steps—

"Find the can OK, kid?"

Which word? "Sir, yes."

"Sir?" Gritty, sloppy laugh. "Not heard that since I was a flyboy. Have a good night!" Still laughing, door shuts.

Makes it to the door, strangely calmer for that encounter, too simple & blunt not to be real. Something pulls away, some far fringe of terror, & he passes through the doorway & down the several steps to the landing. There his friend awaits.

"Hello again, Dylan."

"Is Maya still down there? Is she OK?"

"Are you?"

He nods slowly. "I'm trying to learn what they're showing me."

"Is it so hard?"

"I don't know. Sometimes. I'm glad I'm with Maya."

"Because she's like Cordelia?"

He nods, pauses, then shakes his head. "She was but not so much."

"Is that good?"

"I don't know. Maybe she sent me Maya when she couldn't come."

"Maya will care for you. Let her. Even when it's hard. Remember this, Dylan."

He nods. Sits still. Waits. No more for now. Later on maybe. It's OK. Looking to the entryway below he sees a faint light on the floor, from his room.

OK. Better.

Does any know what any other means? Each a tube of spirit-meat ambulating, does any know? Surrounded all day yet so much stays within. And so much stays within's within. Can any surface reveal true the blood & dream within?

I wonder & bear little answer. I watch, & little explains. I explain & know it sums scantily.

What then? Anything?

"Dylan" says a voice not Maya's from below, & John's face is looking up at him—

"Hi"

"Are you OK? I thought you were on the first floor"

"I am. I was using the . . . can"

John laughed, big laugh. Points. "In there? Is Maya in there? Is she OK?"

"I think so" Dylan comes down the stairs.

"Go in first. I might scare her just showing up."

Dylan pushes the door open. No Maya.

"Maya?"

Blonde head pops up from below other side of the bed. Her smile is obvious if somewhat crooked.

"John's here too"

She looks at him & shivers but keeps it close & somewhat obscure.

They come in & close the door. Safe from the world anyway.

I lived in that room, it's becoming years ago, but some vital remaining bit is there & then still. Well, figure that. I don't know how. How to convey it but to say it was a few months so intense that there are other years of my life don't match—I was alone most of the time & poor growing poorer—

I had a portable CD player & a handful of burned CDs. I had the notebook in my lap, I think, & the one in my bag—some clothes—a few books—

Why this interruption, or whatever it is? Somewhat to burst out with truth how where these people are I am, it's that near still—

Some book went “longing makes the best muse” & I wonder on this—

They look at me. “Should we go?” “I’m not sure.” “We can come back.” “Maybe.” “Now?” “No.”

I sit at the corner writing desk, its frail white chair, my back to them, turn on green-hooded lamp. “OK”

They forget me there & for a bit I choose to forget them, I am writing by candlelight after a long evening in the city, this is an especially tender born memory I don't know why—

I'd seen a movie, somewhat silly but asked for its moment of great attention—

I remember a bus, nearly a book too, a highway, a cinema not too far from my employ, a parking lot, a nicely potent psychedelic—why remember?

A movie called *Adaptation* I think—silly egghead movie—

A lot of bus rides then—to & from jobs, movies, chasing, looking, unloved, walking. Watched, ever? Oh maybe.

Writing at this candlelit table, a memory within a later hour in another city, another table, what any of it?

Why the fullest hours so mired in memory & want?

John keeps to a corner & watches & smiles lightly his hands slightly tight & damp no other clue

—hands to the necessary dance how they tremble along you learning heat & breath, how you move, how to move with you, where you shriek & sigh, the slow of knowing, where I will press harder, leave my mark, assure remembrance for any to come, this flesh was found good & met its hungry hour—

—nothing here, not even a decent lure for it—the boy will have to bite you after I leave—or some later boy—not my reason here—

—I lay in that bed he watches her lay across—tripping too, thick Mickey Mouse comforter—all hours—not a home but a paid niche—I don't know what happened to me in that room—

Love trumps longing—& takes her along—

Perhaps because I hit the floor & saw the world above from that view, saw what cruel was, what kind, had little, nothing to offer anyone & some kept talking to me & some didn't—

I learned in that suffering & I'm not the same—I learned that a person can lie to you & love you both—I learned that the world is too complex for black, white, grey, rainbow, time, space—maybe only dreams hint, my long idea—

I wrote & kept writing & found that this above all is what matters to me—not love, which involves others, but Art, which does not—

“Would Art be possible without others?” Rebecca asks.

“It can be.”

“And love? Is it secondary? Is it separate?”

I look at her. “In truth, I don’t know. But I drove crazy for love in those months & yet was alone, no hand, no face. Strangers watched me, a few made gestures. But my pen stuck in my pocket, my notebooks in a bag on my shoulder, there’s a difference.”

She nods.

This book veers again because I won’t write simply to storytell. All is relevant. I’ve been trying to untangle the world for decades & now can only think: this is how it is: the world *is* tangle. No center. No climax. No beginning nor end.

Dylan, John, & Maya all three fall into a shared shroom trance. She on the bed, the others on chairs. I light the many candles & go from the room, only remain in ink touching paper.

We seek to learn & know often to our own detriment. Yet few can help it.

cxiii.

Love carries longing along, the weeds secret in the straightest rose’s heart, the blood happy warrior in the prophet’s robes, dreams riling in & through every creature in sleep, dreams of soil & root, raw bites of sunshine, heavy sucks of rain, I do not believe that still or time or calm or even follow negate the beast, believe it little, believe it none, roads not straight get there a livelier way, delight the depths most when dip & curve & no barrier, no fence, no rut, just air pushing pulling tempting warning

Can a part mean all if not spread across the whole boiling wild waste of the world?

I feel the wild within & all around & trouble at its tamp, at its controlled bursts, at when it leaps sudden out & someone leans back & cries wicked, foul, cruel, unnatural—

When it happens, finally, she can’t describe what it is, what it means, how it feels, she tries to retreat at first but the punishing hand is swift & several words stay this: “Jazz is not safe yet” she holds her struggle & the kinder hand emerges, a soft hand, strokes her, is gentle, massaging, she is terrified but not completely, the bed is soft, she’s grown used to it, dreamed this moment countless times & ways, wishes the air were not a dark crimson cloud, who is this her first lover? Can she not know? She agrees to his hand undressing her slowly yes yes this is more than protecting Jazz I don’t know what but she’s been cared for here, someone intended her prepared for this, not starved & brutalled, she winces as the hands with their impossibly long soft smooth her panties off & after a complete absence begin on her dress or

is this crazy I'm almost naked! Why am I not fighting or begging or clawing?? What if they hurt Jazz too?

"Please" her invisible whisper

The hands stop suddenly & disappear & there is simple bare hot breathing

She waits, feeling cold, her bra still on, her dress at her knees—what now? Punishment?

"Who are you?"

The breathing slows, deepens, spreads, warms her, lifts her bra from her fingerless & her dress gone too & her ribbon loosed now & sliding down her face across her cheeks, mouth, around her neck, her terror becomes pleasure of some weird kind, her pussy, her thighs are wet, how is this? What is this? Ribbon along her belly & beneath her back & between her ass cheeks, close, close, tight, so tight

"so tight" a breath moans near

she startles to the breath taking flesh, fingers & arms, a back, torso, legs longer than hers & she beneath & a very hard cock gently prodding her inner thigh—

she screams does not mean to but does & the body over her moans again for pleasure of their touch, her second scream aborts & she falls within herself, how this feels, how she imagined, the body above her is soft & hard both & takes her not by force but by right

feels him nudge her thighs apart wider she wants to cry but crying won't happen, she is being taken but not violently, had like a long delight her thighs part more willing, she falls within herself as his cock presses inside her & is happy she's tight for him & tries to question this but no words agree on how, she wraps her legs around him & again he moans & she listens fiercely for it: "sweet flame" & he begins to move in & out deeper each time she claws his shoulders & bites her lower lip til it bleeds this is me being fucked, this is what they all wanted to do to me but he's better, I'm his Sweet Flame, he moans for me for my tightness, my thighs

O MY FUCKING GOD she screams as his thrusts become fast hard & brutal she moves with him better & feels him deep down good & another long moan wordless til the end: "watch"

from nowhere she sees Jazz in a room, allowed only lacy white underwear & hands tied to bedposts, a blurry man gets on top of her & she struggles, the view closing in on Jazz's perfect small breasts, nipples hard & high a man's mouth seals one & bite &

ANOTHER FUCKING ORGASM watching this, the man tears Jazz's white panties from her thighs & her pussy shown close is bare & small & tight & the hand strokes it Jazz moans in fear & pain & want she is very wet with hunger & terrified & the man forces her thighs wide

**O FUCK ME FUCK ME FUCK
ME FUCK ME**

she & her sister scream together & mutually fucked & fucking

GOD IT FUCKING HURTS DON'T FUCKING STOP

Jazz is crying as she is pushed onto her stomach & the great hard cock rips into her small round ass fucking her til she is limp & harder & harder & harder

the vision diminishes & the pleasure returns here this man holds her no more words he will fuck her again later often & she will wait & want other hours

cxiv.

What could burble from a tired view, what waits to set in & play up its point? What does daylight guard, shield, masque?

Is the deepest Beast for gain of coin & acre, for lord of prize booty & mechanical trinkets?

What the hardest drive for beat & breath, tis really a thousand bowed heads & their weapons ready?

Is that all? Dominion over sheep & drones? Knee to none but a statue & then only on the week's merest day?

Is that all? Control over the lively but unimaginative? Come out, look at your slaves, reckon their tiny little rebellions, their peeps of resistance, how they sigh before large words & heavy hands. How the numbers among them fall to disease & abuse & neglect & yet they explain & they pray & they divide what left a little smaller

Is that all? To control a fat, dumb population ignorant of its sweet brutal masters, diverted by an errant tit or bloody crash in street or stadium—

There's nothing to this—and yet your kind fall again & again—history the stained tomes of your great comings & goings—you never see the end, how it arrives a slow lapping then a bit more—

Power grows sloppy, stagnant, mires in missteps & confusion, the least stumble & then another & another—

We watch—neither sheep nor lords—we watch—from corners, from shadows—more of us—not hugely many—ever—

enough—watching & waiting—a little here, a little there—tend the discontent, water the soft unhappy bleatings

whisper: another world is possible—again—and again—and again—

Not much faith how far the sheep will follow along—they tire & distract easily—but we push & tug—here & here—weeds in your inevitable cracks—like roaches, one, two, countless—

Are we the successors? No not in the least—how to govern by full moon, bonfire, wide night's orgasmic cries?

We do not look toward governing, but toward liberation, toward flesh's good long ride & out—

no silly reward for suffering like humanity is some god's manipulation of space & time—

could that be? What Empire bows to true? Nothing else to be revealed but an eternal feeding hall with an obsessive deity-patron hosting?

The world nothing but a lesson, souls atwist in flesh to be rewarded by their sense of repugnance & years & yearns for release?

Could that be? The whole of any hour nothing to an annihilating cosmic devolution?

"Are the White Sox still winning?"

"I think so"

"You notice how he turns to us when his rants break up?"

"Yah, he's clever like that"

"Don't it bother you?"

"Why? He's OK. Some of what he says makes sense. Just sort the rest out."

"What about the rest?"

"Drug talk. Egghead talk. Hippy talk. Too many books."

"Not enough sex."

"Not enough *empathy*. Look, that's why we come here. We got TVs at home & refrigerators for booze. We come here for the good company. Shouting at the TV with others."

"People want people. Or need?"

"Want, yes. Need, I don't know. Most important things can't be explained."

What more, that's all, what more? The reaches of fist & breed, of control & corral, the brutal samely diminishing of years, what more?

CXV.

Long day. Tell me tomorrow will sugar & smile. Long day. Tell me these White Woods are kind, or will end. Long day. My purse is thinning again & I am molten panic's bitch, mewling, feeling the lean heavy within. Long day, I must protect my own, the faces on this carriage, like last time, are nobody to me. Long day, the bastards scored well this inning, the game continues, but it roughed & scarred. Long day, universe please help me, I remember my vow, I want to keep making it good.

I don't know, in this tired darkening hour, what next, what morrow's tale. Don't know & my hands bid me make it, fucking make it, shape it to what it can be, beg universe for help & lay on the hours with intent. Somewhere in between is answer, result—

The freeway slow with dusk's crowded red lights. I feel little empathy; mortal, alone.

Stars pass, a soft creature dreams some hungry world like this one.

I try to love you all, blink it to each one of you, kiss you with shadow's breath—

& a day reck its arc & now its chilled night, here again, pen, today I went toward my knees, trolled for coins sniff in a four-wall plastic cage, come on, give it, give it! Here are my wrists, where them new manacles? Give it, give it! I've got Art to do, not this furious mewling, this self-consuming yawpage, come on, come on!

I sniff pussy nearby & don't much regard, the trees blow somewhere still, this hour barely music taps me—it does—

make it pretty—write them pretty words—past old gooey gods & the many fists of greed & indifference—make worlds prettier for some singing run through with bones of sugar—flesh of dance—blown live with blossoms wild from root to sunshine—work it, bitch, work that inkstick, hard, *harder*

What then, ask, listen, why? How the fuck do I know? Does it matter to answer? To know the mystery, by name & method, finally? Would it help? Would this human way look otherwise, feel smooth & kinder for all at last?

I think so, still, less, seeing worlds as real, illusion, complete, chapter, I wanted to know, like many others, now still, less, where did this change within come from?

Does it mean I love differently now than ago, care slighter? If sacred beliefs, writ deep into the heart, fade, prove lacking, what then?

Can I say: I do not care anymore? I don't know. Maybe it's not so binary a matter; care or don't care. Maybe not even on a scale; care more or less.

What then? Why write? Why look for the next wageslave gig? Is it lack of love for life? A dangerous neutrality? Pending, prelude?

Ego loss? Lack of wonder? Awe? Amazement?

Why fucking bother? Why this word? Why the next? Here they still come, this continuum, the black pen, the lined white paper, the beat up notebooks, from years go unto now, rainy night busstop Seattle, musewife in this world nearby, & hereon? Where? Why? Why bother?

Most things near death breathe, struggle on; I don't think I'm near death & yet I have no less impulse to do so—tis not finite future nor past mourning, tis the bottomless surge of this very moment & its near infinitude of kin—in dreams, in travel, while limping one manner & another for new wageslave hustle & jive—deep hunger, sky's pull, the air cool or dank—

The drinkers at Luna T's Cafe look over to me & raise their mugs slightly—every one of them felt this wordless fury which I complex by trying to word—

how to live, how to live
how to live & why—

fury with sentiment for old tavern nights with long-missing brothers—sentiment deeper for childhood days when I knew nearly nothing, a few books, a TV with six channels, the trees, the clouds, my peers in the lot, a football flying through the sunshine, every hand reaching—

What is now to then? What could I tell you that would help? What do I contain of you still—I'm asking across decades—not weakness but wonder—who were you that I still am? Hurry near me, breach this fool gap—tell me what I cannot tell you—

“Is he OK?”

“Pen. Notebook. Yep.”

“Is this the story or some interlude?”

“Yah.”

“Do we keep him going?”

“He likes us.”

“He likes everything without remembering it always.”

“Shhh!”

When it is a struggle, where has the magick come to salve & point along? I wonder tonight, when it is a struggle & I am trying to find what to grab & ride along with—

Play it close, near, bid the hour ope some its highest juice, cough out the winged sparks, play it acoustic & simple, a jam may come, proly will but near, close—the band will follow as it will—

Remember those nights but true, burn off their sentiment, see this hour's live matter, its tall grass blowing, the beloved nearby reading a good guru's pages—

acoustic, now, remember true & tall both, gather those hours in & near, close, how mind can go & faster!

a burger joint near a ball park, I sat alone & at it—sometimes off a high movie

I want to remember better & know more—I want to undo the mere in me—not an age but a view from here back & hereon—sunsets years gone & recall? Sunrises too,

What then, slow, close, near, call this a building hour, let its ideas & colors scatter about right now—

I am clutching my pen & notebook, hunched in my way, shield from all while feeding on sensation—

another fast food joint, several in a row along a dirty street, I moved from one to the next over hours, writing my way along, not alone because this is my music, I make it for myself, it is food for when there is nothing else to feed upon—



at my saggiest hours I do not write—I waste—I feel it happening & don't care—perhaps a hidden thought knows better will appear—or its dark kin fears none & so live another way—

But I sat & stared hardly an hour ago, pen & notebook slack, & felt a quiet terror—what life if not engaged?

OK then—but what of those hours—I need work, the world won't care for me unless I pay it to—

Those are the hours to go deeper, the ones to battle the mere within hardest—

What then—come here—promise—come to these pages—when it's worst—come here & fight out the words toward the next hour & the next—

come here—persistence bitch—give over to Art the worst passages & others will come too—trust—*trust*—TRUST—

The band kicks up, I feel it even before it happens, drums swifter tug the rhythm higher & lower, the bass pushes a little, a little more, the keyboards rapid too but simpler, anchor something light to the heavy velocity, & the guitars lock & twirl & go, go go—go—go! go!

Ten thousand years high
biting soil & seduce the sunlight
pray the seeds break & climb

Flashing bodies in a fire's cry
the twist bones make in joy
the hours disappear into the moon

I have no name
I am kin to you all
I cannot explain

Tap, tap, smile, born, up, let it all go

cxvi.

It was a thick book, paperback, shaped like a brick, & turns out twas by me—a pirate edition of my pomes & prose—strange—I had not published it—yet full of my writings—it belong to someone else—yet in the desert city common to my dreams there it was—what of this?

I don't know—I was shocked—someone had made a book of *my* writings—just did it—collected them & made a book of them—

Why someone else? Why someone I did not know?

Because if I cannot sing up & true then what the worth, ask it, twice, is this gift for the shadows between bricks, the forgotten dusks,

ask it, & again, this world sums to nothing but truth in its every spark, its every note soft, softer, or moose-loud

Obscure pirate books in dreams? Is this some gift for the world, this world, any world, any gift at all,

sing true, sing truer, there is no choice & never was, the rain falls tonight & so, & so, that's how & why,

perfection, come on, nod, shiver, true, in the worst mouth & the tank hitting a wall,

see, see further, feel, feel *more*, end? there is *none*, the several now many, now many's many,

there have been nights sitting now upon what to come time breaks & hours fall pink open, fecund, nothing ends, nothing ever ends, & nothing ever returns & the answers everywhere, help me, Universe, help me, is one to heal or to dance? Which is truer? Which does night's farthest growl?

I am trying to know with all that I am, I call this Art & breathing both. Is there anything else? Love

Love the remaining corrosion & clue

cxvii.

What really matters is seeing more than one wishes or would rather. More, ugly, strange, difficult. A soul diminishing in view is diminished in reality. Everything possible is not all. Everything possible isn't enough.

Never does everything move in the same direction one & all. I think about the Big Red Cafe in the mall right near you & need no further example.

It looks glitzy & contemporary to the point of non-existence to some eyes. Like other restaurant chains it began humble, one location, a married couple & a cousin & a friend running it. Most think the lovely golden retriever in the logo is the "Big Red" in its name.

That was decades now. 1966. Fancy that. The old photos on the wall tell some of the story, too, the one people know without having to much mind its re-telling. The mix of natural ingredients with more commercial ones, the attention to variety & quality. The desserts more fruit than sugar but not tasting so.

Hiring Vietnam vets upon their ignominious return. Store, original one, was hit with a firebomb once. Survived. Stubborn. Trick was that they hired vets who'd been there & then turned on the war. Tricky.

Big Red expanded & seemed to effortlessly shift with the times. Keeping some, changing some. Stayed family-owned but a larger & larger family. Looked gradually as corporate as any McDonald's or Burger King in comparison.

Expanded big into malls, pushed hard from early on to take up this new styled approach to marketplaces.

Everything changed. Everything changes, hey?

Nothing changed. Were you listening? Nah. There's no story here.

Oh, there so is. Big Red wasn't the dog. The firebomb wasn't an arsonist. The vets found a home like none other they'd known.

Boy there's so much you don't know—

Closer: several TVs mounted in the Utopia Mall's Big Red were blaring a video of an old folk-rock duo back on the charts, fresh fire, a band featuring incendiary lead guitar re-inventing & deepening their sound both—something old performers rarely do—strive for new artistic highs instead of heated up sentiment—

blah blah—but watch it—the dark-haired member of the duo, the lyricist, the funny difficult one, he leans against a huge stack of speakers, strumming purposefully through & among his new bandmate's sonic roar—the listening works both ways—this guitarist raises & diminishes to his partner's acoustic mullings—the guitars dance as two, as one, there is excitement & mystery—flow & surprise—

& regard the taller of the duo, blond, curly hair, singing, crooning, calm but intense, happy but high rising upon lyrics sometimes clear, haiku blunt, sometimes long murky wandering to a patiently honed point, moment of revel—

the TV show's narrator excitedly tells of the duo's resurgence, of its long gone shiny young years, & acrimonious break, & later brief reunion, a success but unrepeated, & now, the return nobody conjured, new, present, it rarely happens, but does, did, is—

except no, it isn't, this isn't happening, the show isn't true, the broadcast so innocuous few patrons regard it enough to remember—

What, then, tis? Clue, for any to regard, obscured hope that one here or there in the chain's many franchises will notice, & unable to desist, ask someone what is this? What channel? These clues do not happen often & change form randomly but they have been occurring for the entirety of Big Red's existence, approaching in 2005 forty years—

When need demands, an ad for Big Red will come on someone's home TV or a bar somewhere like Luna T's Cafe, nothing too odd in the ad yet noticeable, a sly invitation to a mindful soul

Dylan's TV is playing an ad for Big Red, the tune similar to that anti-war song the oldie folk duo is rocking the land with—

Neither John nor Maya nor Dylan notice the ad at first, coming from a TV that wasn't even turned on for over an hour, was it? Dunno—

But it goes on & on, eating itself & growing new roots & arms, spreads beyond the little black-&-white TV screen, on the bed, falling to the floor, jumping into the air & hanging like sparkles, & eventually gathers up near the three friends who know it as other than a TV advertisement—

Where are they? Still scattered on bed & chairs? Look. No. The room is empty. Look again. Closet.

A pink edge glowing around the doorframe, near it, along it, within it, through it, within, pink flood, not blinding but everywhere, details slow to open, the Big Red ad is present, a way to know better? Try—

Better—the forms begin to reveal—three of them? One? Even this melody canna tell fully—

OK release a little, into the crackle & murk, let up, let go, let it, what ever it is, now a little more, crossing through, yes, good, see how they are, see why a little better too, they joined with the mushrooms & each other, a welcome here, work into it,

the story is no line to trace along, more a tangle, a perpetual hour feeding on what passes through, give over to it, more, there's always more, let minutes pass, let more, let else, fall into the between between you & me, here & there, now & then, this & else—

as deep into this traveled, hardly there yet, still the nowhere to figure, a hand across it, small female hand from somewhere, traipses wide the sky, whatever names this rightly—take it, go, go with it—something clearer & simple on the other side—

cxviii.

I sit here for the barest of minutes to remember—so wish to remember—

Mostly the return to roots is a sorrowful one, the years wasted, both spent & mourning—

100 hours in all & gone—about 58 down, watch this story thin, watch what it is become awhile nothing—

How can what was once home mean so much less? Each time I visit there's a familiar thing gone—

Does bitch belong in a story? I don't know. Whatever kind of story this is, if any kind at all, seems to include every sort of ragged drivel—

Here I am in Hartford & for most everyone else it's the present moment—

I see an old black man in a wheelchair & maybe he knows my feeling of loss & sentiment too—his blue Yankees cap, heavy coat, tan trousers, brown shoes—what does he remember from other days? I hope he's dreaming gone right now—foot tapping lightly—

McDonald's—there was another one here—now decades ago—I remember it from 1981 & thereabouts—the Bag Lady Artist—

this one put up within tall new buildings meant to save the downtown—& I wrote here too—& also years ago missing a lover—trying to imagine good days nearing—

the old black man has white hair & moustache—perhaps more grey than white—he keeps dozing—I wonder his dreams—

Why to anything? No answer, no arcing rule. I've spent my life trying to figure any definitive point on the on the map—where to start or finish or guide by & none stay—none hold up to the ever-shift of days—

So I come back here & here is no more a place to stay than any other—no is it

My love & wife-to-be has fallen asleep—I'd wanted to show her my deep past but I suspect it doesn't really matter—

But pushing aside others, there is my private history here—the years of hours I walked around by myself—sat at joints like this one, writing—

this still matters to me—more than the people who rust—my secret world here was lived alone—I can reach into my own childhood & still find this true—

My pens & notebooks—there isn't much else deepest in my heart—

Perhaps best that this story contained a passage from these brown lands of memory—I don't know if anything green remains here—& I don't pretend to think I could rejuvenate my writing either here—

I simply have no peace with any of it—it sifts through my mind with other restless days & questions—

Mostly one gathers it up & along now to hence—what other choice?

continue the old school tour with a cafeteria meant much then—a room with pale tables & orange chairs—a counter in back, its gang of food makers—

I keep asking Why? & more coming up with less, nothing—perhaps I come to old joints to find my old molecules—what's stuck to the air from then—come to feel it—

keep coming & none the clue—

What does it, could it, mean to anyone else—Capitol Lunch—New Britain, CT, my old molecules here, unswept by broom or time—

I sit for a short time in this city—still here & gone both? & ask Why?

This page trying to tell, wishing to tell—

A silhouette of Rebecca near & she's drawing & I'm trying to remember anything about what this book is or was—

Once I chased love—what now?
What do I chase now? I conjured,
I sang, I mattered, how now?

The answer may not be how others were—it may be only knowable in its discovery—

The path? Back there, then? Else.

There is no path, only accumulating sorrow, only something good chased & again, good ever again? More than cheap resemblance?

I sat here, Peoples Donutshop, so long ago, so countless often, I want to remember but what? Does anything gone remember?

I have nobody but my notebooks to remember with. Truth not hype, as the Woodstock voice said.

I'm jobless & begging for a whore's caught coin. I'm sad beyond this hour or any hour.

My youth, a snaggle-tooth chase unceasing, is superseded by an age neither green nor darkening—energy remains, push & drive—

what gone? why does absence seem like accumulated suffocation? Why don't the pleasures of other years remain kind, lightly feeding still?

others here passing their ordinary day while I come a few hours to say goodbye again—

I so deep rifled my mind & memory & the world & its history, & what can be & what isn't—what else? What's left to say?

Nothing, seems. Yet I'll write on & on.

cxix.

Prove anything is over, or exists, or is coming, I wish to, but I can't even say anything is true here or anywhere, wish to, but I've seen so much go, remember what others do not, as each of them likewise remember singly, so tell me what, whatever, I don't know but wish to, what pulls me back to this notebook again, again, what do I find here & what left to offer, a years-long game, so then what?

Awhile sat in old places & point out my ghosts to beloved, memories, important, not,

Return to where my days dwell now & somewhat giddy, here's not sadness & loss & absence, here is what ongoes, & grateful—

blah blah—

try again:

Return to the room at NE Prescott Street & what spurts through the room next door is the strange landlady's barroom raucous laughter as she talks on the phone—would she knew beyond a wall three individuals mold & melt deep inside a closet, deeper inside than she'd be able to go—place where her vague fool thing-ridden view of the world could not conceive—little, less, none—

Mushrooms travel deep when they do, & they bring with them anyone they choose—

Elsewhere:

Noisy Children nearing the apex of its tour, shows last days at a time, one to the next without pause, there's nothing left to break through when they've arrived

And:

Global Wall knows something is coming too—a deepdown shake apart of how it's been & what to come—fire or freedom, both or other? He receives his monthly report on Big Red & reads it far more thoughtfully than in awhile.

“Hartley”

“Hey, man”

“Does it end?”

“Does what end?”

“The psychedelic dream?”

“For you? Or for everyone?”

“Both. I need to know. Did it end for you?”

“I still remember. Sometimes I go back. Is that what you're asking?”

“I'm asking because I don't know who else to ask. I see the struggle, I struggle too but I don't want to abandon what I found in it. I want to believe there's more.”

“Then believe.”

“Like that?”

“Yes.”

“Viking?”

“Yes. It’s me.”

“I’m summoning all I have from what this story has.”

“I’m here.”

“What do I do with it? What is it? I want to know & I don’t know how to get there.”

“Where?”

I shrug.

“Shall I use my Magick Viking Sword?”

“Yes, please.”

He raises it, gives it a series of new flourishes & striking thrusts before his slashes hit hard, slice three-dimensionally so a cube of space sighs & falls away leaving its gape.

“Climb in. Go!”

“Where to.”

He shrugs, smiles, nods impatient for me to git. I do.

Climbing into the cube I lose my body, emerge from it, only something like a long silver thread attaching us still, I watch it fold within itself & trail behind me & cannot figure how to describe this—

Very well—this will do—what this will bring I hope more than a shrug for its answer—

cxx.

It’s like arrival, where this, what, & I slowly amaze, is it the desert? The city I dream of so often?

Why not the planet building, a world with no exterior, just endless floors & rooms & enemies?

Why not the bed where I sit writing, my wife sleeping by me, coughing from a passing illness?

Is it not this very notebook & its beloved black pen?

Sometimes I fear losing Art, fear it near unto paralysis, & can only recover ny hope by finding my way among the hours til it occurs—

This writing is what I know of magick, this making into world from mind, hand, & pen, & I treasure it, even as it possesses me & there is nothing else, no second great loyalty to compare—

Like arrival, every hour spent doing this work—

I’m still recovering from when I nearly lost it, close to losing all I had really—one woman so overwhelmed me—& now she’s elsewhere & what happened to me a history—shared by two who share nothing else—

But given the choice, I chose Art—it was a rotten time, & I had little to hand—

but I did decide—I could have stayed chasing her, til I was homeless, til gone, but no, I had to protect my Art—she never understood that—few do—

my art matters to me more than all else—

yet what tis now? one accumulates memories til they seem to outnumber the rest—

the worst is sentiment & a yearn for the gone—

yet why else have memories? Why their emotive content? One remembers & *feels*
anew—why is it like this?

I can do nothing in this passing hour for what's gone by—nothing. What then?

Memory exists perhaps for many reasons & not all of them clear—

Like arrival, maybe a hint. What's felt close & home & dear will feel that way anew if one
remembers, if one tends possession of the good hours

“You need a drink.”

“No I don’t.”

“Well I do just listening to ya.”

“Was I that bad?”

“No.” Slow bleary regard. “It’s just you won’t quit.”

“I won’t.”

“That’s why I says you need a drink.”

“Thanks. My boozing days are over.”

“Too bad. Didn’t you have no fun?”

“I had a lot for a long while.”

“But no more?”

“I got tired. I found LSD.”

“Ahh yah. You went hippy.”

“It wasn’t far.”

Slow bleary look. “Is it better now?”

“Sometimes.”

It’s better when my pen is going.

Really simple.

cxxi.

World boils in blood even the quiet places, shaded corners where two approach one,
solitary shadows where a soul looks down, great & small, all asking: what for, my pain? What
for, my empathy? What for, my pocked path, & where to?

World boils in blood & whatever human tool to quell it, an hour, a patch, forever, a
weapon, a tome, a shared heart, none, nothing, little, awhile, near, nearing, no, no arrival. I
try talking to dreams but their replies answer questions I’ve not asked.

World boils in blood & the tangled voices on night carriages cannot blend it to
muting, cannot as a mass create a brawling will, cannot—

“Hey, lady, we’re trying to drink he’ah!”

“He’s part of the deal. You know that.”

“What’s his beef? He’s got you, this joint. He seems smart enough.”

Franny appears in an apron, blonde hair tied back, purple eyes glinting, “now, boys,” she drawls more than usual, “let me set you up with a round.” A cheer goes up as half a dozen pair of eyes study her clothes for clues of curves, “Who’s on? Bruins?”

Americus & Noisy Children return in their way to Luna T’s & sit around the band room talking.

“Are we doing any good?”

“We’re making music. That’s good!”

“How are we helping?”

“Helping who?”

“Is it enough to play music these days?”

“It’s what we do, Rich.”

“We’re not politicians.”

“Music used to be on the front lines. The popular music was the best & it fought the bastards up to their door”

“What do you want, Yank? Play a gig & then burn it down for peace?”

“I want what we do to strike deep & last”

“How do you know it doesn’t already?”

“I don’t.”

Dylan, John, & Maya arrive in the White Forest slowly, mixing closet & Forest together til the former recedes & the latter comes clean. Eventually they also resume some version of their separate bodies. The mushrooms create the White Forest & then re-create it deeper, more, especially for these three to experience—

“Global”

“ ”

“Sir”

“No. Not now.”

“How long then? This can’t last.”

“Shhh. I’m watching.”

“She’s asleep. What can you learn?”

“Shh. You don’t know. You never have. You don’t believe & you don’t see.”

“I see it all coming apart.”

“Then you *really* don’t see.”

A glowing grey dusk in the White Forest, raw creatures nip & spark in every & no direction, what this place? If a book has a central beat, a source of its rhythm, perhaps here, this—

The three friends drift apart as the mushrooms do not insist on their enjoined mass, drift apart, each unaware of the other at the moment, it spreads & elongates, does not agreeably pass—

She becomes near-grown doe & leaps her way along, a blonde-furred deer with a rebel pink streak down her back,

lays eyes closed in his dream too, he watches her closely, it is as near as he comes to her, this is the one, perfect, did not react to him with revulsion or fear, looked at him calmly,

through trees she watches him move slowly, more a series of stumbles, he little controls where, doesn't seem to give a fuck, but so much passion in this,

his eyes cruise her body slowly & she lets them, he has seen more & less voluptuous, seen bodies that seemed to be sex in perpetua, seen others fragile & but for a pouty mouth or glinting eye hardly worth the breaking but because of such a heavily erotic anomaly had to be broken,

as his gaze finds her, first the sensation is almost choking, his desire, his black want, she does not move, remembers not to from . . . other days . . . & the look softens, she gentler picks it up with an angled breath & directs it to her eyes . . . there now . . . he shudders,

he nearly fucking freaks when he sees her eyes are open, how could she be? That dosage would knock out an elephant! But, soft, slow, let it be, yes, let it be

She steps toward him, eyes keeping his locked, her body moving with a river's grace through grass & among bushes,

He feels something flush from him with a crack, feels like his bottom half has been blown off & all is thousands of feet of empty air below his stomach, what the fuck?

She nears still, fearless, calm, here is what she feared, no more, not now, not ever—

“Get her out of here now!” He falls & lurches past his man. “Dope her again, dress her, take her somewhere safe & solitary, leave her.”

But his man does not dope her. He sees a way out of all this finally. It's gone on too long, its purpose long past.

He speaks low & fast. “I'm not going to hurt you. Listen as I speak in your ear but don't turn your head. I don't know how or why but you are different. That's why I'm carrying you out. Don't turn your head, leave it limp against my shoulder. A camera is following every step I make. My knowledge of ventriloquism is the only reason I can say anything to you. If you could see your own earlobe, you would think it was talking to you. Haha, yes, don't laugh.

“Now into the car, it's coming up. It's bugged, too, yes, & I won't say anything once we get in so listen very closely, Maya. You are the key to resolving all that is happening here, but only if you choose to be.

"I'm slipping my fingers inside your jeans, Global knows my penchant to personally test the tightness of our young virgin guests. Good, don't flinch, you will find after I have left you, deep inside you a phone number. That is my private line.

"I will grant you any wish in the world if you choose to return here with me. You need only call that number & tell me. I will perform your request & retrieve you here in a private, unbugged vehicle.

"I don't know what he will do if you return, but I do know that it will change everything. You already have. Removing you does not negate this.

"Here is the car & our dialogue ends. I will make sure you are taken to a safe place to recover your energies. After that is up to you. I wish you good luck, Maya. We won't meet again, unless you wish."

Dylan sits cross-legged nude but a waist-patch facing Cordelia, her hair down, her blouse partly open, its bottom curled in her lap.

"You may see now, Dylan"

"I never did before"

"I always hoped"

"You did?"

She laughs & he fractures severally.

"I wanted to see you too."

"I'm sorry, Cordelia."

"Why?"

"I lost you."

"You didn't do it on purpose."

"I know. I love Maya."

"No. You love me. She's my place-holder. But I'm back."

"No. I thought so. But now I don't."

"Why are we here? Why do you want to see me? Why do you want to show me?"

"I want to say goodbye. I don't know how else to do it. I'm sad & scared but I love Maya."

Cordelia leans closer, the folds of her blouse falling back, her heated breath falling heavy on his waist. He does not flinch.

"What will you do when she goes away?"

He flinches. Stands. "I'll do what I did when you went away. It will be even harder."

John watches Marie sitting at that damned coffee house again, annoyed, though when did he see her there before? Can't remember, fuck it, her hair is up, that luscious long neck, I want to bite it. Fuck! Shit! I hate mushrooms! She adjusts in her seat & he whimpers looking at her waist & legs. She turns a page.

He can't get nearer. What is this? Let me talk to her. His eyes trace her every curve through her violet sweater. He knows them all, clothes hide nothing when a heart's body has coupled with its mate.

"Can you hear me?"

"Why, John? Why talk to me? Don't you like that little girl? Lost all your powers to seduce?"

"I love Maya but she's not mine & I'm not hers. Not like that. I'm supposed to help her."

"How, John? She looks ripe enough. I don't think she'll do too badly under you."

"No! I love you."

She turns to him finally, closes her book. "You lost me. You love a memory."

"Then why are you here?"

"You won't let go. Would you like to see where I really am tonight? Who I'm fucking? Or that I'm alone & missing you? You don't know if you want me happy or missing you or what. So you put me here, reading. That's all. Neutral. Maybe waiting for my lover. Maybe just spending my night alone. You don't know."

"How do I let you go?"

She nods, walks toward door. "Go tend your striplings, John. Give them the tenderness you horded from me. But remember: they're not so young. And you have a long way to go back to that cabin hideout prison of yours."

cxxiii.

One fades, now another, I wonder what how why, this I suppose is what I do, & these night tales press me for more—

Sitting in the Red Dog Restaurant, fiction within a dream, I see how it happened, Maya wasn't one to hang by the mall's fountain, no, she wasn't even a mall bitch like the others. She was looking for a job. Things had gotten bad where she was, not a hustling uncle or stepfather, no, but fanatics, bold, bright, happy & angry both fanatics, pulling her in, trying, working on her every day, she was the prize, her brain the one every necktied lunatic wished credit for washing—

Came in, her slinky, flowing self, not sure why, hadn't even known which bus to the mall, but Red Dog had always been around, & more ads on the TV & radio than she could ever remember, they were strange, called for her—

"Red Dog began operations in 1966 with a small restaurant in the famous Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. We partnered with the local organizations to feed the golden children arriving, give them jobs, help them out. We still do. We employ young people in hundreds of towns & cities, offering them industry leading pay rates & benefits." The was enough to convince her. "We haven't forgotten those early days, our precious roots. We know why so many came to Haight-Ashbury. Do you?" She nodded. She knew. "Come talk to us."

"Maya, are you listening?"

Briefly she considered going down on him. Push him back on her bed & unzipping those perfectly creased trousers. Make him say o God o God o God, making him pray to the god of her perfect pink lips rather than explain again the levels of initiation, the years of study, the sacrifice toward greater good & higher reward.

She sits in the corner of Red Dog & orders a lemon-strawberry rice milkshake. The waiter is young, smiles at her face not her chest. Nice. "Anything else?"

She pauses. "Are you hiring?"

He tilts his head. Smiles nearly bright enough to raise her interest. She holds close. "I'll get you an application with your shake."

"Thanks."

I was bleeding a brown liquid from the base of my middle finger, & crying because my father cursed my job hunting efforts. Woke up whimpering, then fell back again.

Another dream, visiting a long lost friend, digging up his yard to leave a half-buried home-made book for him as a gift. He watched behind his house's front curtains, then came out eventually.

A movie theater, no chairs, more the rows of hills found in drive-in theaters, & multiple screens angled in different directions for all the parked cars to have a good view—

"It won't do no good." says Benny Big Dreams. "You can't integrate dreams & waking. It doesn't work that way."

"How does it work?"

"You can cross things over. It happens all the time. But you want more."

"I think I can do better."

"You want to know what you see me shooting up every day?"

"Will you tell me?"

"I shoot up the world, every bit of it. Then I piss it out in dreams. Good, long pisses, the kind you like."

"Are you God?"

"No! Well, yes. But no in the sense you people usually mean."

"I don't know what sense I mean."

"All I'm saying is, you're going at it big & you should go at it smaller."

The White Woods. "Ahh, shit," John mutters. Maya & Dylan nowhere in sight. He doesn't know how even. Finds he still has a hard-on from seeing Marie, especially from *fighting* with her. They had the greatest, dirtiest angry sex he'd ever experienced. Fucked til the rage diminished. Took hours sometimes. Then they'd hit some late-night dive for drinks & the jukebox. Fun times.

"You're remembering the best nights. What about the rest?"

"Shit happens. Why not remember happy?"

"I don't fucking know anymore, Marie. Whatever you are."

"They're close. Just wait & listen."

"Why is it you talk to me, then bring up those kids! Why don't you help me for real!"

"How?"

"For one, show up, here, with me. So I can see you & touch you."

"What else?"

"I love you. I'm trying to handle all this weird shit. But I need a drink I can't take & I need a better lay than that girl can give me. You got it. You took my cock-frenzy smoothly & I felt clean, not gutted, after."

No response.

"Marie?"

Nothing. Fucking nothing!

"Poor schmuck!" one of the drinkers mutters at the TV.

"He needs a hooker" another one says.

"I feel for him. A good woman in bed leaves her mark on your heart & your balls. Serious shit!" Several nod.

"Hey, is that Red Dog joint real?"

"Don't be a dumbass." "It's a TV show, numnutz."

"I thought I heard about it before. Ask the barman."

Mr. Bob adjusts his spectacles. Wipes down the dark wooden counter a few times, thinking.

"Well, Chuck?"

"I can't say."

"Can't? Won't?"

He smiles, unmoved.

cxxiv.

A moment when I was a single note of panic, something about a bus & chasing another whore's task for coins, & then an hour, another, I was sitting in a small quiet room waiting to do the shuck & jive, breathing narrowly through a necktie, oh let me suck it for a coin, oh fuck me for a coin, oh here my unique hour for a coin,

yet I have & do & accept that the day is Empire's own sweet bitch while the night crawls out & dances freer, & I can push a little at the bondage, will take countless to crack it

This hour, this close cafe hour in the fecund midst of night, smooth & open, whore low the day, sex high the night,

will there come another year when every hour its blooming gold?

I sit miles & years from then, yet surely closer—

Mine, yours, ours to push on, discover deeper the human tide, secret, truer beat & breath, where language praises but no longer names, where music builds literal over figurative—

where—fuck this--stop.

And I ask: is Art another dimension? Does it cross time & space, mix & affect in its own way, change & changed, what can be known about this?

Where disparate elements cross here is Art, that much I am sure of—

Where the corners of the story are folding for it Art—

CXXV.

I'm sitting at Luna T's Cafe's bar again, head down, writing slowly.
 "Is he OK?"
 "You OK?"
 I look up at the row of drinkers & realize I know none of their names. Just drinkers.
 Day laborers. Come and go.
 "We don't mind."
 "Not everybody's a rock star."
 "No. True."
 "We're part of the everybody else in the world."
 "Is that good?"
 "We have our troubles. The usual kinds. Family. Job."
 "Yah."
 "Someone has to be in the audience."
 "I never wanted that. All the time, I mean."
 "I'm Tom. These jokers call me the Professor because I went to college."
 "He's smart too!"
 "Yah. Smart enough to turn a history degree into a desk job at a computer."
 "Hey, that's good work!"
 "Don't knock it, Tom!"
 "It's paid for that beer gut of yours!"
 I grimace.
 "Look, it's OK. Just take it a page at a time. Nobody can tell you how."
 "I know. I wish someone could."
 "Do you? Art is your one place the boss of things."
 "It's lonely."
 "Everything's lonely sooner or later."
 "Some worse."
 "Maybe. But I don't know anyone who isn't suffering one way or another."
 "Hey, Tom, you're the Buddhist. All life is suffering & that cockamamie?"
 Tom grimaces now. "I hit the bottle hard. When I get worst I remember my college years studying Eastern religion. It was good. Asceticism. Karma. A sense of truths."
 "Then he saw his first wife's true ass wiggle in one of them short skirts!"
 Raucous.
 "She tried. But she dropped out. But she tried for me."
 "Have you read the *Rig Veda*?"
 Tom's eyes bulge behind his square glasses.
 "Watch out, Tom! This one will out-egghead ya!"
 "It's ancient scripture. A thousand or so songs."
 "I know it. Why?"
 "A hundred or so talk about the rootless plant Soma."
 "I suppose you're right."

"I know I am. Do you know about Eleusis?"

"Greece? Persephone? A yearly feast?"

"It was a 2000-year-old psychedelic initiation suppressed by the early Christians."

"Uh-oh. Hey Tom you smoked some of the weird stuff? Ever eat magic mushrooms?"

"Fun with fungi?"

More raucous.

"I think you know more than I do. But what about Greece? And the *Rig Veda*?"

"And Jimi Hendrix? And David Lynch?"

"Uh-oh. Here we go!"

"I miss your point."

"Put down your drink, Tom."

"Whoa! Check this out!"

"It's down. What now?"

"How real do you want to be? Any of you?"

"That's up to you, isn't it?"

"If you believe Art is secondary, that it is created but does not have life."

"What do you think?"

"I think everything has affect. When physics & mystics say the same thing as the dancers at a high mountain rave, it means something."

"What?"

"That material reality, that differentiation, is truth but not complete truth."

"Like God?"

"What? Did the hippy say God? I thought they don't believe in such quaint things!"

"I didn't say God but I didn't deny that. I suspect that a combination of chance & free will offers us something like an opening. A place to start. To say, here is what you have to hand, what can you do with it?"

Tom nods. "But why do you need us?"

"Hey, Tom, I think he needs you!"

"We're just boozers!"

"Pretty faces along the bar!"

"Someone's got to keep the barman company!"

"No. All of you. What have I learned along the years but the danger of losing touch with earth or sky?"

"I agree. So, why us? Why now?"

"It's a real bar. I have connections still."

"Dope connections?"

"Ha! Just kidding, hippy!"

I nod.

"Don't get sensitive. We like you!"

Tom shushes his friends with a flick. "What can we do?"

"I don't know. Keep an eye on how things are."

"What kind of things?"

"Whatever. Just pay attention."

"We can do that."

"You expecting trouble?"

"Always."

cccv.

What of my other companions long coupled with this long book's night? The Viking, the Artist, Hartlee, Benny Big Dreams, the trees?

I wonder about simply dismissing them all. What good?

"Tell me, Hartlee."

His blue eyes arc over the years to arrive at my question, squarely. "I don't know. I liked you, Ray. But I don't know what you need."

The Artist smiles. Lears.

"What about you, Viking?"

"I gave you my service, my sword. I have protected you as I was able."

I nod. We stall.

"Must every pass be for the end zone? All receivers out, 50 yards in 9 seconds?"

"Yes, always. One catches, always does, a bit taller, fights a bit harder, keeps his feet, fleet & tough, won't let me down. I remember. A thousand thousand pages & songs from one moment, so many years ago, there it was, anything possible, within polity & physics yet behold! He catches the ball, falls backward into the end zone, no penalty, no fumble, score! Fucking score. I remember."

"No less?"

"Never. How?"

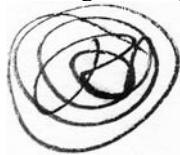
"Others do. On their way tonight in party dresses. Not evil. Not lesser."

"Feed."

"You too! Deny it!"

"I want to choke the throats who swallow me, who try, I want to be bone & gristle, enmity to the rich lazy tongue, its bright easy feed. No less. Ever."

Hartlee laughs. "You never change. We can't stop you." The rest nod. "Take us along though. You're a good trip. I've had worse."



To be continued in Cenacle | 68 | April 2009

WITHIN'S WITHIN: SCENES FROM THE PSYCHEDELIC REVOLUTION

Music. Poetry. Rant. Mindfood.

turn on . . .

tune in . . .



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James Fadiman



Opening the Doors of Perception

Published online by the Psychedelic Library
<http://www.psychedelic-library.org/FadimanOpening.htm>

The date is early in 1966. Four of us are seated around a table, called out from the session room for a moment to respond to the contents of a special delivery letter. Back in the room, four men are lying on couches and cushions, eyeshades blocking out the daylight, hearing a Beethoven string quartet on stereo headphones. Each man, a senior scientist, had taken 25 micrograms of LSD-25—a very low dose—about two hours earlier. Two of these men are working on different projects for Stanford Research Institute, another for Hewlett Packard, the last is an architect. They are highly qualified, highly respected, and highly motivated to solve technical problems. Each one brought to this session several problems that he had been working on for at least the past three months and had been unable to solve. None had any prior experience with psychedelics. In another two hours, we plan to lift their eyeshades, take off their headphones, turn off the music, and offer them finger food, which they will probably not touch. We will help them focus on the problems they came in to solve. They are the fifth or sixth group we have run. The federal government has approved of this study. It is an experimental use of a “new drug,” a drug still under review and not available commercially.

In 1966 there were about 60 projects around the country actively investigating LSD-25. Some were therapeutic studies: one at UCLA showed remarkable success in getting autistic children to communicate again; others were working with animals from monkeys to rats to fish, even with insects. Spiders, it turned out, make radically different web designs when given different psychedelics. A year or two earlier there had been a disastrous experiment when psychiatrist Jolly West gave an elephant enough LSD, it is fair to say, to kill an elephant. It did. The dose was several hundred thousand times what any human had taken or would ever take. While it made a brief media splash, the disaster did not seem to stop the research going on worldwide. Sandoz Pharmaceuticals in Basel, Switzerland, the developer of LSD-25, had recently made available summaries of the first 1000 human studies. LSD-25 was the most studied psychoactive drug in the world. It was remarkable in two ways. One, it was effective in micrograms (millionth of a gram doses). This made it one of the most potent substances ever discovered. Two, it seemed to have the effect of radically changing perception, awareness, and cognition but not in any predictable way. These results seemed to be dependent not only on the drug effects, but equally so on the situation of the subject—what they’d been told about what they were going to experience under the drug and, even more interesting to science, the mind-set of the researcher, whether or not he or she had communicated a point of view to the subjects in any given study.

In short, here was a substance whose effects depended in part on the mental expectations of both subject and researcher. Often people in the studies had experiences that appeared to be deeply therapeutic, blissful and life changing, religious in content or mystical, but they also might have experiences that were profoundly disturbing, confusing or terrifying. The after-effects of the experience looked more like learning than simply the passage of a chemical through the brain and body. LSD was the genie in the bottle and there were bottles of it all over the country and a growing number outside laboratories and research institutions as well.

When that special delivery letter came from the Food and Drug Administration, none of us yet knew that many of the early conferences of LSD researchers had been sponsored by foundations that were covertly funded by the CIA, or that the United States Army had been giving psychoactive substances to unsuspecting members of the military, prisoners, even some of their own staff. Nor did we know that every project in the country, except those run by the military or intelligence agencies, had received a similar letter on the same day. Sitting in Menlo Park, in the offices of the International Foundation for Advanced Study, we four plus a small support staff were running the only study designed to test the hypothesis that this material could improve the functioning of the rational and the analytical parts of the mind. We were trying to find out if, instead of being diverted into the amazing inner landscape of colors and forms or into the adventures of mystical exploration or psychopathological terror, LSD-25 might be used to enhance personal creativity in ways that could be measured.

There had been a string of very successful studies in Canada showing that LSD administered in a safe and supportive setting led to a high rate of curbing long-term alcoholics' drinking. Other studies conducted in Southern California by Oscar Janniger showed that artists' work changed radically during an LSD session and often was changed thereafter. However, it was an argument in the art world, and in the science world, if that art was "better." Our team wanted to see if another aspect of the creative—technical problem solving—could be helped by the use of these agents.

The answer thus far in our study was a resounding "yes." We were amazed, as were our participants, at how many novel and effective solutions came out of our sessions. Client companies and research institutions were satisfied with the results (if not fully informed of how they occurred). Other members of research groups, one whose members had worked with us, were asking to be included in the study. It was a deeply satisfying time.

The letter from the FDA was brief. It advised us that at of the receipt of this letter, our permission to use these materials, our research protocol, and our capacity to work with these materials in any way, shape, or form was terminated.

I was by far the youngest member of the research team, a graduate student at Stanford in a psychology department that I'd not informed about this research. Two of the others were full professors of engineering at Stanford in two different departments, and the fourth was the founder and director of the foundation, a scientist in his own right who'd retired early and set up a nonprofit institute to better understand the interplay between consciousness, deep personal and spiritual experiences, and these substances.

Very soon we would need to go back into that room where the four men lay, their minds literally expanding. I said, "I think we need to agree that we got this letter tomorrow."

We went to our subjects, now the last group of people who would be allowed the privilege of working with these materials on problems of their choosing with legal government support and supervision for at least the next 40 years.

One example of the kinds of results we were seeing did come out of that last session. The architect had bought in a project to build a small shopping center. The client had not liked his earlier designs and he was stuck. In the session, he saw the project, completed, and in his mind was able not merely to envision it but to walk around inside it, to see the size and shapes of bolts, to count the number of parking spaces, etc. The design he came up with was approved by his client and he spent the next few weeks doing the drawings that corresponded to the project he had already seen in its finished state.

How did I come to be in that room at the International Foundation for Advanced Study when only a few years before I'd been a writer, living in Paris in a sixth floor walk-up, living on as little as possible, sleeping in train stations and hostels when I traveled and staying with whoever would put me up and feed me? As was said of many of our lives then, it was a long, strange trip.

What sent me from Paris to Stanford and headlong into psychedelic research was not just a visit from my favorite college professor, Richard Alpert (later known as Ram Dass) and his friend, Timothy Leary, but also a cordial note from my draft board asking about my whereabouts. I realized that there was an M-1 waiting for me to cradle it across my elbows while crawling through mud and dank vegetation in Vietnam while overhead shots were being fired in both directions, giving me the chance of dying by enemy or friendly fire. In my mind, neither of those choices made sense, so I returned to the United States to the draft deferment haven of graduate school.

For the good of the military and for the nation, I was sure then and am now that keeping me out was the better alternative. When you have a long history in junior high and high school of being picked last for team sports, you don't assume that you will thrive in the infantry, let alone rise to the higher level of competence needed in actual combat. I saw my government fellowship to study psychology as the government saying that it was better to keep me out than to deal with any potential hazards to others and myself it risked by inducting me.

Why I plunged into psychedelic research, however, did begin with that visit from Alpert and the first night we spent together.

Paris, 1961. I'm sitting at night in a cafe on the Boulevard St. Michael, watching all the people who in turn are watching me. I'm twenty-one and have just taken psilocybin for the first time, and I've no idea what it is or does, but I know that the man sitting next to me is my favorite professor, Dr. Richard Alpert, who has given it to me as a gift. The colors are getting brighter, peoples' eyes are flashing light when they look at me, the noise is playing inside me like a multi-channel broadcast. I say, as evenly as my quavering voice allows, "It's a little too much for me." Richard Alpert grins at me from across the tiny round glass table. "Me too, and I've not taken anything."

We return to my walk-up a few blocks away. The hotel has a plaque to the side of the front door that says that Freud stayed there. I am writing a novel and sometimes imagine that in the future, they will add a second plaque. But not tonight.

I lie down on my bed, Alpert takes the chair. (That about uses up the space in the room.) I watch my mind discovering new aspects of itself. Alpert keeps letting me know that whatever my mind is doing is safe and all right. Part of me is not sure what he is even talking about, another part knows how deeply right he is, another part of me hopes he is.

One week later, I left Paris and followed Alpert and Leary to Amsterdam, where they joined Aldous Huxley to jointly present a paper to an international congress. Leary and Alpert were working together teaching psychology at Harvard and were already in the midst of controversy over giving psychedelics to graduate students and other members of the academic community. Six weeks after their conference, I was flying to California to begin graduate work in psychology.

While at Stanford, I led three lives. In life one, I wore a sport coat and tie, and made sure I showed up every day in the psychology department, visibly a student doing what he could to learn from the lips of the masters. In my second life, two days a week, I was a research assistant at the off-campus International Foundation for Advanced Study. There I sat in on daylong, high-dose (and legal) LSD therapy sessions. Each client had at least two people supporting their experience during the day. A man and a woman stayed with every client (male and female energy seemed helpful), plus there was a physician who checked into the session now and then, and was there if needed. I can't recall when we ever had any simple medical needs but it added to the feeling of total support and reassurance that made the LSD sessions more beneficial. In addition, a Freudian psychoanalyst had met with each client when he or she first volunteered for our program to determine if each person selected was likely to benefit and unlikely to run into problems beyond their ability to cope. Given the government's skittish stance at the time, the analyst told us we needed to have close to a 100% cure rate, something not demanded nor achieved by any other therapy. My third life was spent with the people who revolved around Ken Kesey. They used psychedelics of all sorts, as well as uppers, downers, marijuana, even alcohol and cigarettes. One member worked for a pharmaceutical chain and arrived at any event with his pockets stuffed with samples.

It was a group of outlaws, but not lawbreakers—more like paradigm breakers. LSD and many of the other drugs were not illegal in the early 1960s, but their use, especially outside any research or medical setting, was not socially acceptable. These explorers of inner space were doing field research, exploring what it was like to have free access to these drugs outside of any control or restraint except self-preservation. During these times, when these drugs were opening doors all over one's mind, the Kesey group used psychedelics while playing, singing, drawing, watching TV, cooking, eating, making love, watching the stars spin and dance, and asking aloud the sorts of questions their experiences brought up:

- Who are we, really?
- Is the soul mortal or immortal?
- What did Blake or Van Gogh or Plato really experience?
- Is my identity inside my body or does it interpenetrate my body and yours?
- What is common between my mind and the nearest redwood tree?
- Were time and space subjective?
- What was fixed? What moved?

- What stayed constant from session to session (that is, what was remembered)?
- What happened in a group where all the minds were opened, loosely linked, and apparently in telepathic communication with one another? When someone in such a group becomes terrified, do the rest get sucked into the down draft? Or can the combined weight of the other minds right the one who has fallen away?

These questions and more were at the heart of the Kesey group's experience. Not outlaws, but outliers. Better to think of them not as the cultural icons they eventually became but as people who had outgrown the limitations of the laws and were furiously developing a bigger set of laws to bring order to their own larger sphere of behavior and experience. It sounds philosophical and it was, but it also had all the raw immediacy of putting your arm across the throat of a drowning swimmer so he or she doesn't panic, drag you underwater, and kill you both.

For me, a critical moment happened one morning at the edge of the Pescadero town dump. Pescadero is a tiny town two miles from the California coast about 15 miles from Stanford. The dump is a hillside, the bottom of which was littered but the top and sides were covered with vines sporting small patches of wildflowers. One dawn I went there with Ken Kesey and his girlfriend at the time, Dorothy, a woman who would later become my wife (after 40 years of marriage, we think it will probably last). The night before, she'd taken some LSD ("dropped acid," to say it the way it was) and was in a state of delighted wonder at the personal discoveries she was making about her own consciousness and how it shaped and reshaped her world. Ken had taken us to Pescadero because it was a wonderful place to meet the dawn. It is correct to say he took Dorothy there, but because I had been guiding her through parts of the night, she wanted me along.

I was not in the inner circle of the Kesey world. I was too straight and too unwilling to take drugs with everyone. None of the women in the group were interested in me, and I had not much in common with any of the men. However, as I worked with LSD by day and legally, I was welcome as an odd ornament, as might one want to have someone around who trained tigers or who could chew broken glass.

Dorothy recalled that the defining moment of that dawn came when she was about to step on a small flower. Instead, she lay down on the path and stared at it. I suggested she let the flower do the communicating. What she saw—not thought or contemplated but saw, such was LSD's curious power—was the flower fully open up, go through its cycle and wither, but also she watched the flower reverse this same flow, recovering from its dried state, re-flowering and returning to being a bud. She could see it go in both directions, forward and backward in time, dancing its own birth and its own death. When she said what she was seeing, I confirmed that her experience was one others had shared. Relieved, she returned to her plant contemplation.

She looked up at Ken—handsome, rugged, talented, a natural leader, possessed of enormous energy and power. Also married. Ken had two kids; he was fully committed to the marriage and also to having it open to other partners as well. Dorothy looked at me. I was engaged, but my fiancée was 6000 miles away in Scotland. What she did see was that I seemed very knowledgeable, even comfortable, about her newly discovered inner world.

From the moment of the encounter with the flower, her gyroscope began to spin away from Ken and turn toward me. Our courtship and marriage is outside this moment in time but as one can trace a river back to a small spring coming from a cleft in a rock on a mountainside, our three lives shifted that day through the lessons that arose from Dorothy's encounter with a single flower.

What about my legal research? What was it like to do legal drug research? Since the Sixties, on most college campuses, it is no trick to find a psychedelic drug, take it, have a wild ride, and to wonder about it all. To give it to people in a setting so supportive that 80% of our subjects reported that it was the single most important event of their lives—ah, that was a different time. For more than two years while the experiments were going on, I'd slip away from Stanford classes when I could and sit with people who were having their introduction to psychedelics and, through psychedelics, to other levels of consciousness, and perhaps to other levels of reality.

Since I was usually introduced as “a graduate student who will be with us today,” I was not primarily responsible for conducting the session. I was truly a sitter and could watch, sometimes help, and sometimes record what people reported as they went through the events of the day. Sometimes I would only appear in the late afternoon, and take a person home for the evening. We found that while the effects of the LSD would have worn off after 8 hours, a person's newly found capacity to move in and out of different realities diminished, but did not stop until the client was too tired to stay awake. I often had the treat of being with people as they puzzled out the major events or insights of the day. I also helped them deal with their families, who were usually baffled by the combination of tales of bizarre inner experiences and the sense of being with someone, a husband or wife, who was so totally open and loving and caring that it often brought the spouse to joyful tears.

By day, in my graduate studies, I was being taught a psychology that seemed to me to cover only a small fragment of the mind. I felt as if I were studying physics with teachers who had no idea that electricity, atomic power, and television existed. I would listen, take notes, ask appropriate questions, and would try to appear as if I were not dumbfounded by the tiny little nibbles my instructors seemed to assume was the whole of the apple of knowledge. By night, having completed my school assignments, I would read books that helped me to piece together the larger world I'd been opened to: *The Book of the Dead*, the *I Ching*, the works of William Blake, Christian mystics, and Buddhist teachings, especially those of the Zen masters whose cutting-through-it-all clarity was wonderfully refreshing. I also struggled with Tibetan texts that were hard to comprehend, but clearly had been written by people who knew about what I was discovering. I would sit and read those books wrapped in plain covers the way one had wrapped dirty comics in *Look* magazine in high school to hide pictures of women with amazingly large breasts from one's teachers.

When I could no longer follow the texts I would sit, cross-legged, on the bare linoleum floor of my graduate student “office,” which was in a trailer turned temporary classroom. The space was even smaller than my bedroom in Paris. I'd look through the sliding glass door at a small pine tree planted to deny the fact that we were in a temporary trailer in a large parking lot. I would breathe and stare, breathe and stare until the tree began to breathe with me. It would not move nor sway, but would begin to shine with an invisible illumination, the fact of it extremely alive. It would grow and shrink before my eye, a very

tiny movement, but reminiscent of the flower at the Pescadero dump. I'd attune to that tree until I felt balanced again and then go home to bed.

A Moment of Reflection

A few months after we ended our research program, California passed a law declaring the possession or distribution of LSD to be a crime. Federal policy concerning LSD was later consolidated with the enactment of the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970.

Why did our drug research frighten the establishment so profoundly? Why does it still frighten them? Perhaps, because we were able to step off (or were tossed off) the treadmill of daily stuff and saw the whole system of life-death-life. We said that we had discovered that love is the fundamental energy of the universe and we wouldn't shut up about it.

Christianity, for example, says come to the Father through Me, and be forgiven sins (even those you had not committed) and be loved without reservation. FREE. FREE. FREE (as if that alone wouldn't make you look underneath to see where the price tag has been hidden).

Once you have declared yourself to be a Christian, however, you find church authorities saying that the actual price of being forgiven includes admitting that you are not only unworthy, but you are very, very unworthy and there is no way you will ever get to worthy on your own hook.

What we found out was that the love is there, the forgiveness is there, and the understanding and compassion are there. But like water to a fish or air to a bird, it is there all around and without any effort on our part. No need for the Father, the Son, the Buddha, the Saints, the Torah, the books, the bells, the candles, the priests, the rituals, or even the wisdom. Just there—so pervasive and so unending that it is impossible to see as long as you are in the smaller world of people separated from one another. No wonder Enlightenment is always a crime.



Notes on Contributors

G.C. Dillon lives in Plainville, Connecticut. His writing last appeared in *Cenacle* | 66 | October 2008. His piece in the current issue reminds me, in a very distant way of the kind of pastiches we used to write long ago, when we didn't know any better. Sometimes it's better *not* to know any better. Right, Gerry?

Ralph H. Emerson lives in South Glastonbury, Connecticut. His writing last appeared in *Cenacle* | 66 | October 2008. It is a dearly held wish between us that we publish a book of his linguistics essays next year, or 2010 if need be. Scriptor Press will be its proud host into the world, whenever this book comes.

James Fadiman received a Ph.D. in psychology from Stanford University in 1965 and is a well-regarded writer about psychedelics. His essay in this issue was also published by Scriptor Press this year in *Out Here We is Stoned . . . Immaculate: A Tenth Anthology of Writings about Psychedelics*.

Judih Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her writing last appeared in *Cenacle* | 66 | October 2008. She is one of the strongest people I know, one of the most dedicated to her family, her Art, and to peace. Her poem in this issue responds to the loss of a loved one in the best possible spirit of poetical dirges.

Jim Burke III lives in Hartford, Connecticut. His writing last appeared in *Cenacle* | 64 | April 2008. Of Jim's work and life and thought and way of living I can only say, like David Hartley below, that he has schooled me in ways that I never imagined were possible during the many years I sat sometimes dull in classrooms. Teacher, guru. Friend and brother above all.

David Hartley lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. His work in this issue is his first time publishing in *The Cenacle*, but I dearly hope is not the last. Hartley and I years ago tripped a lot of nights fantastic, listened to the Dead, grooved with a lot of trees. He has taught me more nearly anyone on the planet.

W.S. Merwin lives in Haiku, Hawaii. He is rightly considered one of the greatest living poets in the world. Kassi and I had the privilege of hearing him read his poems live in Portland recently. In 2008 Scriptor Press published a slim anthology of his voluminous work, entitled *Walking at Night Between the Two Deserts, Singing*.

Kassandra Soulard lives in Portland, Oregon. Her contributions to *The Cenacle* are too numerous to account for her, and go far past the editing, proofreading, and graphic design work that makes this publication so much the better. She is my comrade, my kinsfolk in the most ancient sense of that word. Beloved, muse. These all.

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Portland, Oregon. As this year ends, in snowy Portland, and I consider my fortune at being housed and employed, I renew also my vow to preach hope and live hope and find hope for others where they have none, and share what I have. My Art is my own, but equally important is that I am a citizen of this world, and must do right by it as I am able.

Victor Vanek lives in The Dalles, Oregon. His photography last appeared in *Cenacle* | 66 | October 2008. Right now, this night, Victor is holed up in his home, snowed in from a winter blast, watching corny old movies and plotting his moves to remake the world a little kinder, or at least a little bit of it.

WAR IS NOT THE ANSWER
ONLY LOVE CAN CONQUER
HATE

OK
Don't fuck up.
Gue want) - EH CF

Damn the man
fight the empire

NO

